History
SAIGON FALLS

An Ovi Publication

© 2026 Ovi Publications - All material is copyright of the Ovi
& Ovi Thematic/History Magazines Publications

Ovi Thematic/History Magazines are available in
Ovi/Ovi ThematicMagazines and OviPedia pages
in all forms PDF/ePub/mobi, and they are always FREE.
If somebody tries to sell you an Ovi Thematic or Ovi History Magazine
please contact us immediately.

For details, contact: ovimagazine@yahoo.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced
into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise),
without the prior permission of the writers or the above publisher of this magazine.

editorial

The image is etched into the collective memory of a nation: a long, olive-drab helicopter teetering on the edge of a crowded rooftop, the last tether to a world that was vanishing. It was not a military defeat in the traditional sense, there was no Battle of Waterloo, no surrender signed in a railway car. Instead, the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, was a collapse. It was a psychological and political rupture, a chaotic, 48-hour fever dream that ended not with a bang, but with the surreal thumping of rotor blades fading over the South China Sea.

For nearly fifty years, the fall of the South Vietnamese capital has served as a national touchstone, a word ...Saigon, that conjures a singular, potent meaning in American discourse, the quagmire, the credibility gap, the haunting image of a promise left unkept. But to view the events of that week simply as the closing chapter of a failed war is to misunderstand its true legacy. The fall of Saigon was not an ending; it was a beginning. It was the birth of a national neurosis that has quietly dictated the terms of every foreign policy debate, every military intervention, and every cultural reckoning that has followed.

In this issue of Ovi History we take a minute-by-minute journey back into the chaos of Operation Frequent Wind, humanizing the history through the eyes of the last Marines and the allies they left behind. We explore how the humiliation of the Ford administration and the bitter partisan battles over aid forged a “Vietnam Syndrome”

a deep public aversion to overseas entanglements that dominated Washington for two decades. Yet, paradoxically, we also trace how the "stab-in-the-back" myth born from the fall helped forge the hawkish Neo-conservatism of the Reagan era and beyond, creating an ideological foundation that would later propel America into the "forever wars" of the 21st century.

The legacy extends far beyond politics. We examine the unending tragedy that followed, the brutal re-education camps, the exodus of the Boat People and the destabilization of a region. We look at how the war never truly ended but instead migrated into American culture, becoming a "haunting" defined by the black granite of the Memorial Wall and the searing films of Oliver Stone.

Most critically, we ask whether the lessons were ever learned. As we draw stark, uncomfortable parallels between the rooftop evacuations of Saigon and the chaotic airlift from Kabul in 2021, the question of whether the U.S. can ever escape its own history becomes urgent. And looking forward, we use the specter of April 30 as a lens to examine the most perilous potential conflict on the horizon, a confrontation with Iran. Would another war in the Middle East simply be the latest verse of the same old song, another quagmire born of political hubris and limited by a lack of public will?

The helicopters left long ago. But as these pages will show, the ghosts of Saigon have never stopped shaping our world. ■

Thanos Kalamidas

HOW
MANY
MORE
WARS?
HOW
MANY
MORE
HURT
INNOCENT
CHILDREN?

STORIES AND NARRATIVES FROM TIME PAST

https://ovipeadia.wordpress.com/
https://realovi.wordpress.com/

OVI History

The Ovi history eMagazine

Saigon falls
April 2026

Issue 18

Editor:
T. Kalamidas

Contact
ovimagazine@yahoo.com

On March 26, 1975, the fall of Saigon marked the decisive end of the Vietnam War, a conflict that had ravaged Southeast Asia for decades. While the city's official collapse came on April 30, the March offensive signaled the beginning of the end. North Vietnamese forces, under the direction of General Văn Tiến Dũng, launched a series of rapid, overwhelming attacks on South Vietnam's central highlands and key coastal cities.

Ovi Thematic/History eMagazines Publications 2026

contents

Editorial 3

Saigon falls

The final hours 9
How Saigon's collapse reshaped American domestic politics 17
April 30, 1975; Saigon falls 23
The boat people and the unending tragedy 25
The war that never ended 31
HEY JOE…: a Personal Essay & Meditation on the American Government's War Against the People of Vietnam By David Sparenberg 39
Why the war was lost 47
The "Vietnam Syndrome" vs. the "Reagan Doctrine" 55
Saigon 1975: A warning for the "forever wars" 61
The diplomatic betrayal 67
The ghost of Saigon 73
Could the fall have been prevented? 79
Is the U.S. staring at another Saigon in the Persian Gulf? 85

Vietnam War In Exile Poems by Michael Lee Johnson 90

Last flight from a burning city by Mike Nomads 101

April in history 110

The final hours

History does not often end with a clean line. More often, it collapses, messy, human, unfinished. The fall of Saigon in April 1975 was not just the end of a war; it was the unravelling of illusions, policy failures, and human endurance stretched beyond its limits. In its final 48 hours, the Vietnam War ceased to be an abstract geopolitical struggle and became something far more intimate: a desperate race for survival.

The long shadow before the fall

To understand those last hours, you have to confront the uncomfortable truth; the fall of Saigon was not sudden. It was inevitable long before the final helicopters lifted off.

The Paris Peace Accords had promised a ceasefire and a pathway to peace. Instead, they created a fragile illusion. American troops withdrew, but the North Vietnamese forces did not meaningfully retreat. The war continued; only now without the direct presence of U.S. combat troops to prop up South Vietnam.

By early 1975, the military reality was undeniable.

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), once heavily supported by American airpower and logistics, was collapsing under the weight of coordinated North Vietnamese offensives. Cities fell one by one. Refugees flooded south. Morale disintegrated.

And in Saigon, denial lingered, right up until it couldn't.

April 28, 1975 — The city begins to fracture

Saigon in the final days was a city caught between routine and panic.

Markets still opened. Motorbikes still buzzed through the streets. But beneath that thin veneer of normalcy, fear spread rapidly. Rockets began landing near the city, including at Tan Son Nhut Airport, the primary evacuation route.

When the airport became unusable, everything changed.

The only way out left was by air and not by planes.

April 29, 1975 — Operation frequent wind begins

At 10:51 AM, the coded signal was broadcast on American radio:

"The temperature in Saigon is 105 degrees and rising."

Moments later, Operation Frequent Wind was underway, the largest helicopter evacuation in history.

From that moment on, time compressed into urgency.

Outside the Embassy: The weight of desperation

The U.S. Embassy became the focal point of hope and heartbreak.

Thousands of South Vietnamese civilians flooded toward its gates. Many had worked with Americans as translators, drivers, aides. They knew what was coming if they were left behind.

And they were right to be afraid.

U.S. Marines formed a defensive perimeter, tasked with an impossible job: maintain order while deciding, in effect, who lived and who didn't. Helicopters could only carry so many people. Every flight out meant leaving dozens, sometimes hundreds, behind.

Some clung to the embassy walls. Others scaled them.

In those moments, policy gave way to instinct. Marines lifted children over barriers. Officers made split-second decisions that would haunt them for decades.

The rooftops: A city lifts into the sky

Helicopters became the final lifeline.

American CH-46 and CH-53 helicopters flew continuous loops between Saigon and U.S. Navy ships waiting in the South China Sea. Pilots pushed their machines and themselves, to exhaustion.

One of the most enduring images from those hours shows a helicopter perched atop a building, evacuees climbing a ladder to reach it. Often mistaken for the embassy, the photo actually captured a CIA evacuation from an apartment building but the symbolism transcends the specifics.

Saigon was lifting itself into the sky, one desperate climb at a time.

South Vietnamese pilots joined the exodus, flying their own helicopters out to sea. Many, after dropping off passengers on U.S. car-

riers, pushed their aircraft overboard to make room for others.

It was an act of sacrifice that bordered on the surreal, millions of dollars of machinery discarded for the chance to save more lives.

The last marines

Inside the embassy compound, the final hours stretched into something surreal.

The Marines were among the last to leave, holding the perimeter as long as possible. They operated under strict orders, but the reality on the ground blurred every rule.

At 3:45 AM on April 30, the evacuation of American personnel was ordered complete.

Yet hundreds of South Vietnamese remained outside the gates.

The final helicopter lifted off from the embassy roof at around 7:53 AM, carrying the last contingent of Marines. As it rose above the city, it left behind a silence heavier than the noise of rotor blades.

It marked the end of American presence in Vietnam.

But not the end of the story.

April 30, 1975 — The tanks arrive

By late morning, North Vietnamese forces reached the heart of Saigon.

At approximately 11:30 AM, tanks from the North Vietnamese Army crashed through the gates of the Independence Palace, the symbolic seat of South Vietnamese power.

Inside, President Dương Văn Minh had little choice.

He announced the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam.

The war, at least in its conventional form, was over.

The journalists who stayed

While diplomats and military personnel evacuated, some chose to remain.

Journalists, photographers and correspondents bore witness to the final act. They documented not just the fall of a government, but the collapse of a worldview.

Among them were reporters who had covered the war for years, watching its escalation, its brutality and its contradictions. In those final hours, their role shifted from chroniclers of conflict to witnesses of history's closing chapter.

Their dispatches captured something official reports could not: the human cost of strategic failure.

The human reckoning

It's tempting to frame the fall of Saigon as a military defeat and it was. But reducing it to strategy misses the point.

This was, at its core, a human catastrophe.

- Families were separated at embassy gates.
- Allies were abandoned due to logistical limits.
- Soldiers who had fought for years faced an uncertain and often brutal, future.

For many South Vietnamese, the end of the war marked the beginning of hardship: re-education camps, exile, and displacement.

For Americans, it triggered a profound reckoning. The war had cost over 58,000 American lives and millions of Vietnamese lives. And in the end, it concluded not with victory, but with evacuation.

The illusion of control

If there is one lesson in those final 48 hours, it is this: control is often an illusion.

For years, policymakers believed they could shape the outcome of Vietnam through incremental escalation, diplomacy, and strategic pressure. But by April 1975, those assumptions had collapsed.

What remained was not strategy but reaction.

Helicopters instead of plans. Evacuations instead of victories.

The image that endures

The fall of Saigon endures in images:

- A helicopter lifting off from a rooftop.
- Crowds pressing against embassy gates.
- Tanks breaking through palace walls.

But the most powerful image may be less visible: the moment a Marine turns away from the gate, knowing he cannot let everyone in.

That is where history becomes personal.

After the fall

Saigon was soon renamed Ho Chi Minh City. The war was over but its legacy endured.

In the United States, it reshaped foreign policy and public trust. In Vietnam, it marked reunification but also years of economic hardship and political consolidation.

And for those who lived through those final hours, the memories never left.

Final reflection

The fall of Saigon was not just the end of a war. It was the collapse of certainty, the realization that even the most powerful nations can reach a moment where options run out.

In those last 48 hours, history did not move slowly. It accelerated, compressing years of decisions into minutes of consequence.

And in the sound of helicopter blades fading into the distance, an era came to an end, not with triumph, but with departure. ■

How Saigon's collapse reshaped American domestic politics

On April 30, 1975, the images broadcast from Saigon marked more than the end of a war; they marked the collapse of an entire political narrative in the United States. Helicopters lifting off the roof of the U.S. Embassy, desperate Vietnamese civilians clamouring for escape and the steady advance of North Vietnamese forces became symbols not just of military defeat, but of a profound rupture in the relationship between the American government and its people. The fall of Saigon did not merely end U.S. involvement in Vietnam; it reshaped American domestic politics for a generation.

At the heart of this transformation was what came to be known as the "credibility gap" a widening chasm between official government statements and the reality perceived by the public. While this gap had been forming for years, fueled by revelations such as the Pentagon Papers, the final collapse in Vietnam made it undeniable. Americans had been told repeatedly that victory or at least stability was within reach. Instead, they witnessed a chaotic and humiliating withdrawal that contradicted years of official assurances.

For President Gerald Ford, the fall of Saigon was both a foreign policy disaster and a domestic politi-

cal nightmare. Having inherited the presidency in the aftermath of Watergate scandal, Ford was already presiding over a nation deeply suspicious of executive power. His administration's inability to secure additional military aid for South Vietnam exposed the limits of presidential authority in a post-Watergate era. Congress, now controlled by Democrats and emboldened by public opinion, refused to grant the funds Ford argued were necessary to sustain the South Vietnamese government.

This conflict between the White House and Congress was not merely a policy disagreement; it was a constitutional and ideological turning point. For years, presidents had exercised broad authority in foreign policy, often with limited oversight. Vietnam changed that. Lawmakers, reflecting a war-weary electorate, asserted themselves more aggressively than ever before. The passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973 had already signalled this shift, but the refusal to support South Vietnam in its final days confirmed that Congress was no longer willing to defer to presidential judgment on matters of war.

The partisan bitterness surrounding Vietnam's end also deepened divisions within American politics. Many Republicans accused Democrats of abandoning an ally and undermining U.S. credibility abroad. Democrats, in turn, argued that continued involvement would only prolong a futile and morally questionable conflict. These debates were not simply about Vietnam, they were about the broader role of the United States in the world. Should America act as a global enforcer of anti-communism or should it adopt a more restrained, pragmatic approach?

Out of this turmoil emerged what came to be known as the "Vietnam Syndrome." This was not a formal doctrine but rather a pervasive mood, a deep scepticism toward military intervention overseas. The trauma of Vietnam, its human cost, its ambiguous objectives

and its unsatisfactory conclusion, left Americans wary of future conflicts. Politicians of both parties understood that public support for military action could no longer be taken for granted.

The Vietnam Syndrome shaped U.S. foreign policy for nearly two decades. From the cautious diplomacy of the late 1970s to the limited interventions of the early 1980s, policymakers were acutely aware of the political risks associated with deploying American forces abroad. Even President Ronald Reagan, who famously sought to restore American confidence and strength, approached military engagements with an eye toward avoiding another Vietnam. The emphasis on quick, decisive victories, seen in later conflicts such as the 1991 Gulf War, was in many ways a direct response to the lessons of Saigon.

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of Saigon's fall was its impact on public trust. The credibility gap did not close with the end of the war; if anything, it widened. Americans became more sceptical of official narratives, more likely to question government motives, and less willing to accept assurances at face value. This scepticism extended beyond foreign policy, influencing debates on everything from intelligence assessments to domestic governance.

The fall of Saigon also altered the political calculus for future presidents. No longer could leaders rely on vague promises of progress or distant strategic goals. The American public demanded clarity, accountability and above all, honesty. The political cost of failing to meet these expectations could be severe, as subsequent administrations would learn.

In retrospect, the end of the Vietnam War marked the beginning of a new era in American politics, one defined by constraint rather than confidence, scepticism rather than trust. The images from Saigon did more than capture a moment of defeat; they crystallized

a shift in national consciousness. The United States did not retreat from the world, but it approached it differently, with a heightened awareness of the limits of its power and the importance of public consent.

The credibility gap, once a term used by critics, became a permanent feature of the political landscape. And in that sense, the fall of Saigon did not just end a war; it reshaped the very foundations of American democracy. ■

Download for FREE, **HERE!**

THE RISE of ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACIES
30 PLUS ONE AUTHORITARIANS COMPLETELY OUT OF THE CLOSET
THANOS KALAMIDAS
We are living in an age of political illusions. The old binaries, democracy versus dictatorship, the free world versus authoritarianism, have blurred.

The rise of illiberal democracies by Thanos Kalamidas

#savethechildren

April 30, 1975; Saigon falls

On March 26, 1975, the fall of Saigon marked the decisive end of the Vietnam War, a conflict that had ravaged Southeast Asia for decades. While the city's official collapse came on April 30, the March offensive signaled the beginning of the end.

North Vietnamese forces, under the direction of General Văn Tiến Dũng, launched a series of rapid, overwhelming attacks on South Vietnam's central highlands and key coastal cities. The South Vietnamese army, weakened by years of attrition, declining U.S. support, and strategic blunders, crumbled in disarray.

The capture of Saigon, then the capital of South Vietnam, was the culmination of the Spring Offensive. As North Vietnamese tanks advanced, panic swept the city. Thousands of South Vietnamese civilians and remaining American personnel scrambled to evacuate. Iconic images of helicopters airlifting evacuees from the U.S. Embassy rooftop symbolized the chaotic withdrawal. On April 30, North Vietnamese forces raised their flag over the Independence Palace, forcing the South Vietnamese government to surrender unconditionally. ■

The boat people and the unending tragedy

When the guns finally fell silent in 1975 and the long, brutal conflict known as the Vietnam War came to an end, the world exhaled. For years, Southeast Asia had been synonymous with napalm, jungle warfare, and superpower rivalry. Peace, it was assumed, would bring healing.

It did not. Instead, the end of the war marked the beginning of a quieter, more insidious catastrophe, one defined not by bombs, but by silence, displacement and despair. Across Vietnam and its neighbours, the consequences rippled outward, reshaping societies and destabilizing the entire region.

The "Peace" that followed victory

In unified Vietnam, the new government moved swiftly to consolidate power. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps over a million, former South Vietnamese soldiers, officials, intellectuals and even suspected sympathizers were sent to so-called re-education camps.

These camps were not classrooms. They were instruments of control. Detainees endured forced labour,

ideological indoctrination, and indefinite detention. Many were held for years without trial. Families were torn apart, livelihoods destroyed and a pervasive climate of fear settled over the country. In theory, these measures aimed to rebuild society; in practice, they deepened trauma and seeded long-term instability.

This internal repression became one of the primary drivers of what came next: a mass exodus that would shock the world.

The boat people - desperation at sea

By the late 1970s, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, later known collectively as the "Boat People" began fleeing the country. They escaped in fragile, overcrowded vessels, risking everything for the chance of survival.

Among them were large numbers of ethnic Chinese Vietnamese, caught in the crossfire of political suspicion and economic persecution, especially after relations between Vietnam and China deteriorated sharply.

The journey was nightmarish. Boats capsized. Pirates attacked. Storms swallowed entire families. Those who survived often spent months in refugee camps across Southeast Asia, in places like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

The scale of human suffering was staggering. It was not merely migration; it was flight from a system people no longer believed they could survive.

Regional destabilization - Cambodia and Laos

The fallout did not stop at Vietnam's borders. In neighbouring Cambodia, the rise of the Khmer Rouge turned post-war instability into genocide. Under the leadership of Pol Pot, the regime attempted to engineer a radical agrarian utopia.

The result was one of the 20th century's darkest chapters. Between 1975 and 1979, an estimated 1.7 million people died from execution, starvation, and forced labour in what is now known as the Cambodian genocide. Cities were emptied, families dismantled and entire segments of society erased.

Meanwhile, in Laos, the communist takeover by the Pathet Lao triggered its own wave of repression and displacement. Many Hmong people, who had supported U.S. forces during the war, were forced to flee or face persecution.

The interconnected nature of these crises meant that Southeast Asia became a region in motion, millions displaced, borders strained and governments overwhelmed.

The refugee crisis that redefined humanitarian response

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the exodus had become a full-scale humanitarian disaster. Refugee camps across the region were overcrowded, under-resourced, and politically contentious. Host countries, already struggling with their own challenges, began to push back against the constant influx.

It was at this moment that the international community was forced to act. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinated what would become the largest resettlement program in its history at the time. Western nations, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and France, opened their doors to hundreds of thousands of refugees.

This effort saved lives but it also underscored a painful truth: the end of war does not mean the end of suffering. In many ways, it merely changes its form.

An unfinished reckoning

The legacy of the Boat People crisis is still visible today. Vietnamese diaspora communities around the world carry stories of loss, resilience, and survival. Cambodia continues to grapple with the memory of genocide. Laos remains marked by displacement and silence.

What makes this period particularly tragic is its invisibility compared to the war that preceded it. There were no nightly broadcasts, no iconic images seared into global consciousness at the same scale. And yet, for millions, the post-war years were just as devastating.

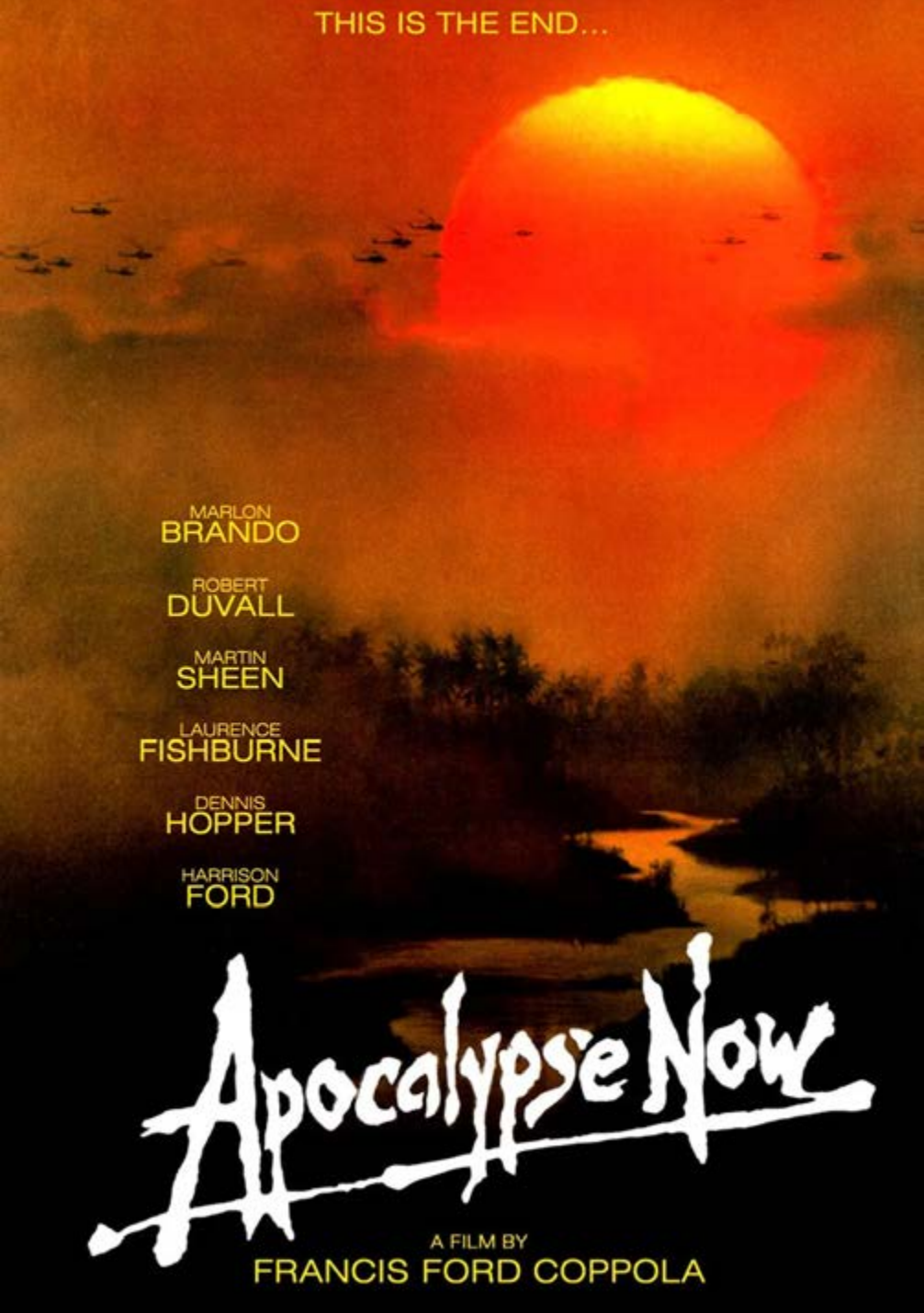
History often draws a line at the moment conflict ends. But in Southeast Asia, 1975 was not a conclusion; it was a turning point into a new kind of crisis, one that unfolded slowly, across oceans and borders.

Beyond the battlefield

The story of the Boat People is not just a footnote to the Vietnam War. It is a reminder that political victory can coexist with human catastrophe.

The region paid a heavy price, not only in lives lost but in the deep fractures left behind. Re-education camps, forced migrations, genocide and refugee crises are not isolated events; they are interconnected consequences of upheaval on a massive scale.

If there is a lesson to be drawn, it is this: the true cost of war is rarely confined to the battlefield. It lingers in broken societies, in displaced populations and in the quiet, unending tragedies that follow long after the world has moved on. ■


THIS IS THE END...
MARLON
BRANDO
ROBERT
DUVALL
MARTIN
SHEEN
LAURENCE
FISHBURNE
DENNIS
HOPPER
HARRISON
FORD
Apocalypse Now
A FILM BY
FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

The war that never ended

History books will tell you that the Vietnam War ended in 1975, marked by the fall of Saigon and the final evacuation of American personnel. But that version of events, neat and chronological, misses a deeper truth. Wars do not always end when the last helicopter lifts off. Some wars linger in memory, in identity, in politics. The Vietnam War is one of them. It remains, decades later, less a concluded conflict than a persistent question, echoing through American culture like an unresolved chord.

From the polished black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the searing films of Oliver Stone and the mournful lyrics of Bruce Springsteen, Vietnam is not simply remembered; it is relived, reinterpreted, and contested. It is a war that America continues to argue with itself about.

A war without closure

Unlike World War II, which concluded with clear victory and moral clarity, or even The Korean War, which settled into uneasy stalemate, the Vietnam War offered no satisfying narrative for the United States.

It ended not with triumph, but with withdrawal, an outcome that defied the American tradition of framing wars as necessary and ultimately just.

This lack of closure is precisely why Vietnam persists. It resists simplification. Was it a noble attempt to contain communism? A tragic miscalculation? An imperial overreach? The answer depends on who you ask and when.

In that ambiguity lies its cultural power. Vietnam is not just history; it is a lens through which Americans interpret subsequent conflicts. Every debate about military intervention—from the Persian Gulf to Iraq to Afghanistan, inevitably circles back to Vietnam. It is invoked as warning, as analogy, as accusation.

The wall: memory without commentary

Nowhere is this unresolved tension more visible than at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Designed by Maya Lin, the Wall does something unusual; it refuses to tell you what to think.

There are no triumphant statues of generals, no declarations of victory. Instead, there are names, over 58,000 of them, etched into stone. Visitors do not look up at it; they descend into it. The design forces confrontation, not celebration.

This absence of narrative is itself a statement. The memorial does not resolve the war's meaning; it preserves its ambiguity. Each name is a life cut short, but the cause remains unstated. In that silence, Americans are left to wrestle with the same questions that have lingered since the war's end.

Cinema: rewriting the war

If the memorial offers silence, Hollywood offers interpretation and often, indictment. Few filmmakers have shaped the cultural memory of Vietnam more than Oliver Stone, himself a veteran. His films, Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July, and Heaven & Earth, present the war not as a geopolitical struggle but as a moral and psychological collapse.

In Platoon, the enemy is not just the Viet Cong; it is internal division, embodied by clashing American soldiers. In Born on the Fourth of July, the story shifts to the home front, where returning veterans confront not gratitude, but alienation.

These films reject the heroic narratives of earlier war cinema. They replace them with ambiguity, trauma, and critique. In doing so, they helped cement a version of Vietnam as a war that damaged not only the nation's global standing, but its moral self-image.

Even filmmakers who did not serve in Vietnam have been shaped by its legacy. Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now transforms the war into a surreal descent into madness, suggesting that Vietnam exposed something darker within American identity itself.

Music: The sound of disillusionment

While films reinterpret the war visually, music captures its emotional residue. Bruce Springsteen's Born in the U.S.A. is often misunderstood as a patriotic anthem. In reality, it tells the story of a Vietnam veteran returning to a country that has no place for him.

The song's protagonist is not celebrated; he is discarded. "I had a brother at Khe Sanh," Springsteen sings, referencing one of the war's most intense battles, "they're still there, he's all gone." It is a line that collapses time, the war is over, but its losses are not.

Other artists of the era, from Bob Dylan to Creedence Clearwater Revival, turned Vietnam into a backdrop for protest and reflection. Their music did not merely oppose the war; it reshaped how Americans understood dissent itself.

Vietnam normalized protest as a form of patriotism. It made questioning the government not an act of betrayal, but of engagement. That cultural shift endures.

The political ghost

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of Vietnam is not artistic, but political. The phrase "another Vietnam" has become shorthand for a quagmire, an unwinnable war with unclear objectives and mounting costs.

American leaders have invoked Vietnam both to justify restraint and to argue for decisive action. During debates over the Iraq War, critics warned of repeating Vietnam's mistakes, while supporters insisted that hesitation, shaped by "Vietnam syndrome" could embolden adversaries.

This dual use reveals something profound: Vietnam is not a fixed lesson. It is a contested one. It can be interpreted as a warning against intervention or against half-measures. Its meaning shifts depending on the argument being made.

And so, it continues to influence decisions long after the war itself ended.

Trauma without end

Beyond politics and culture lies the human cost, which did not end in 1975. Many veterans returned with what would later be recognized as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, struggling to reintegrate into civilian life.

Unlike previous generations, they often did so without widespread public support. The war's unpopularity blurred the line between opposition to policy and treatment of soldiers. For many veterans, the homecoming was not a moment of relief, but of isolation.

This experience further distinguishes Vietnam from earlier wars. It created a generation that felt disconnected from the narrative of American heroism, a fracture that continues to shape discussions about how the nation treats its service members.

A war that watches the future

The Vietnam War endures because it is unresolved, not in the sense of unfinished combat, but in its meaning. It is a war that resists closure, that refuses to settle into a single narrative.

Every time the United States considers military intervention, Vietnam reappears, not as history, but as presence. It asks uncomfortable questions; what are the limits of power? What is the cost of intervention? How does a nation measure success or failure?

These questions have no easy answers. They did not in 1975, and they do not today.

And that is why the Vietnam War never truly ended. It lingers in stone, in film, in song and in the uneasy space between memory and meaning. It is not just a chapter in American history. It is a mirror, reflecting the nation's doubts back at itself, again and again. ■

Wars on Humanity:
Ukraine, Palestine and
the role of Global Leaders
by Mahboob A. Khawaja, PhD.
This book is a must-read for all, regardless of ideology and politics, a vital work about humanity's present and future, and that is what makes it so valuable.
WARS ON HUMANITY
UKRAINE, PALESTINE AND THE ROLE OF GLOBAL LEADERS
MAHBOOB A. KHAWAJA, PhD.
Download for FREE, HERE!

POVERTY
HAS NO
AGE
GENDER
COLOUR
RELIGION
POLITICS
NO MERCY

SWIERK

HEY JOE…:
a Personal Essay & Meditation on the American Government's War Against the People of Vietnam

By David Sparenberg

"Those of us who had been involved in the Southern movement were not likely to accept, without deep suspicion, that the United States government—so loath to protect equal rights in its own country—was dropping bombs in Vietnam on behalf of democracy or liberty or self-determination or any other noble principle." -Howard Zinn, Historian

For me to write about the war of the American government and military against the agricultural people of Vietnam is highly personal. I might even say monumentally intimate. There is a moral responsibility in doing so and a moral affliction as well.

The Vietnam War was my coming of age initiation into the adult expectations of American manhood. To be a good American then (as now) was to be unquestioningly patriotic. To be patriotic was (as now) to be manly, ready, willing and able, to participate in the politics of organized mass murder. To go to war.

Vietnam was a crossroads where a forced decision had to be made. One went this way or that and had to cope with the consequences. I did not enlist or wait for my number to come up with the local draft board. I joined the Resistance and have lived on that side of choice and direction my entire life.

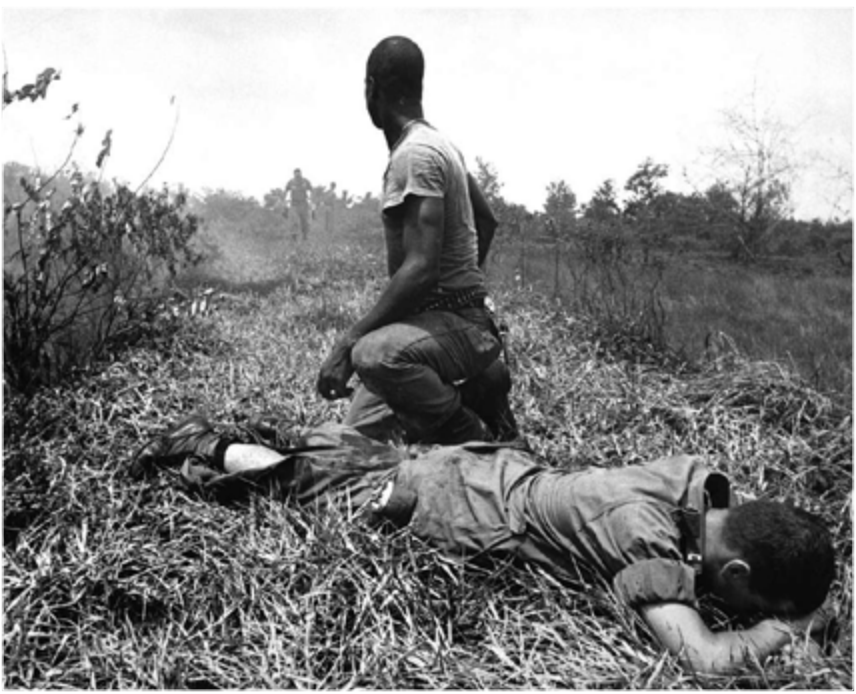
It took years to gain momentum and in the interim the loss of life was great and the suffering tremendous. Not by itself but as a contributing pressure, the combined Peace and Civil Rights Movement became factors in the manner of the war in Nam's ending. But The Movement, notwithstanding dedication, indignation, passion and jail time, was not the deciding force alone.

For all the superior military technology, economic wealth and national self-righteousness, the United States of America lost the power play of war against a third world agrarian country half a planet away from American shores. This magazine theme is the fall of Saigon and I will get to that through drawing on several of the wounds of memory. At the end of this process, I intend to conclude as to what happened and why in the capacity of my personal witnessing.

There was a day of massive protests during the infamous People's Park occupation of Berkeley, California. Demonstrators were congregated in Lower Sprawl Plaza on the UCB campus, when without warning a single Huey Gunship appeared from behind the building tower and bore down on us. I shall never forget the smile of the gunner with his reflective sunglasses, clutching his weapon as if ready to begin firing. I shall never forget the shock wave of terror that seized the crowd, the screams as people began to flee. The gunner did not fire on us but the gunship passed over at low altitude, spewing blue dyed blister gas onto the fear possessed protesters. Not ordinarily anticipated tear gas, blister gas performs the duty it was named of. When water is applied to wash away the chemical irritant, blisters, like telltale welts, form on human skin.

I have many times remembered that day of government ordered domestic terror and many times considered the horror clutching the organs of Vietnamese peasants watching a squadron of Hueys approaching their villages and rice fields. Was the grin on the face of the sneering gunman that day in Berkeley the look of the American poster boy for winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people in the heat and death toll of the so-called pacification program?

America's weapon of choice in Vietnam was napalm. Napalm manufactured by the Dow Chemical Company is jelled gasoline gifted in copious amounts to the jungles, rice paddies, farmers and Viet Cong fighters alike. Napalm is not just another incendiary device. Napalm sticks to human skin and continues to inflict until savagely burning down to the bones of its victims.



Numerous photographs came out of the Vietnam invasion. There is one which is indelible and can never be dismissed—an image as powerful as any of survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The photo I am referring to depicts the following: a group of rural Vietnamese children are running for dear life along a dirt road. In the background a heavy plume of black smoke bellows into the sky from the burning ruins of bamboo huts. In the center of the dirt road is a small, skinny, defenseless and naked girl. Her face is distorted by fear and suffering. And she (are we to assume?) is the enemy of American prosperity—property, profit—and democracy? This eternally tortured little Asian girl depicted fleeing the American terrorism of napalm.

One night as American families sat down for dinner, TVs blaring the 6 o'clock news, a member of the South Vietnamese army positioned a bound, shoeless prisoner suspected of being a Viet Cong or VC sympathizer. With cameras rolling, the officer shot the suspect in the left side of his head—live on American television! That night the American people had gushing blood and splattered brains added to their evening meal.

There were Vietnamese Buddhist monks who self-emulated, using the American sacred fluid of gasoline to turn themselves into human torches, protesting in ultimate sacrifice against the Agent Orange and Napalm decimation of their homeland, and neo-colonial subjugation of their people. The first to do this was a woman who poured a gallon of gasoline over herself. The sensitivity of human memory never recovers from the shock of watching a body consumed in flame without flinching, without a gesture of self-protection.

The anti-war movement grew stateside, as well as internationally (there was a War Crimes Tribunal in Paris), but the war continued and periodically spread into neighboring Laos and Cambodia.

To the glory of Zippo lighter fluid, Lieutenant Calley's troops from the 1st Platoon of C Company, burned down the village of My Lai and slaughtered the inhabitants—somewhere between 300-500 of them, mostly women, children and the elderly. Against all predictions of security, the Tet Offense took place and broke through into Saigon, demonstrating to the Viet Cong, North Vietnamese People's Army regulars and throughout the civilian population that for all of its might and capacity to commit mass murder, America was not invincible. The price was high, but if the wretched with their Punji sticks and mortars paid the fearsome toll, they could drive out the foreign giant, notwithstanding the pounding of warships and the relentless sorties of B52 bombers raining down cluster bombs and anti-personal munitions. The American manufactured monsoons of casualty causing explosions and indiscriminate shrapnel.

And all of these afore mentioned examples contributed to the fall of Saigon and the hastened withdrawn of American political and military presence from that region of Southeast Asia.

But there is one more factor which to me must be added. It is the revelatory puzzle piece to most humanly explain the fall of Saigon and the abrupt pulling out of USA military forces. There was a question commonly repeated on the streets of the South Vietnamese capital. It is as simple as it is obscene and the question went like this: "Hey Joe, you want buy my sister?" The offer was made by children to sex traffic a family member often for no more than a Hersey's chocolate bar.

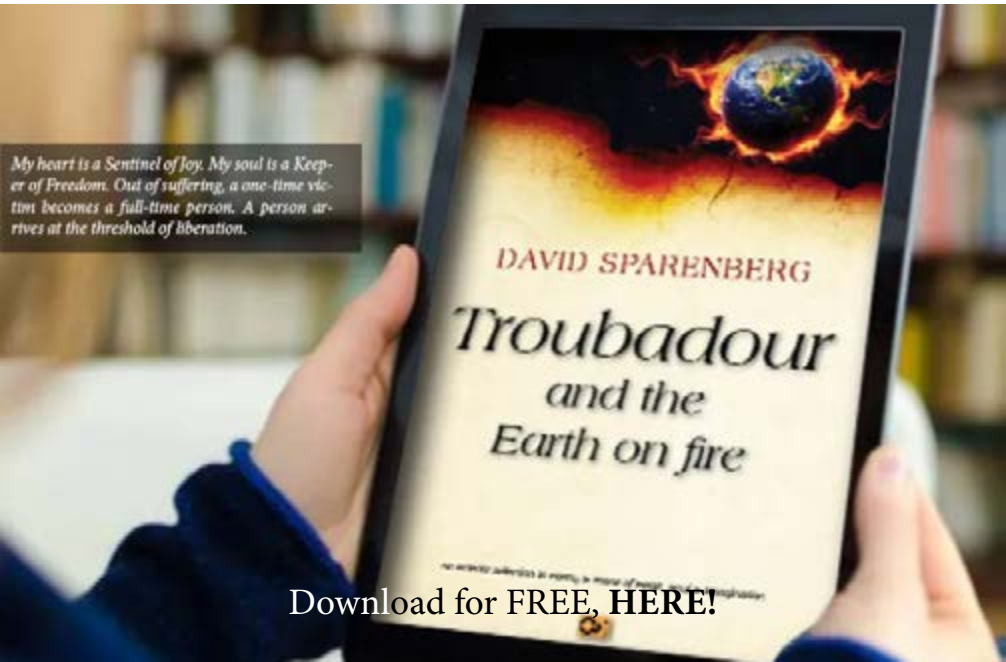
As strong as was the Vietnamese drive for national independence, my contention is that the parental instinct, a process deeply and darkly at work beneath the firefights, defoliation and search and destroy missions, was an elemental response motivating extraordinary sacrifice among ordinary Vietnamese not to forever have their urban centers corrupted into brothels for foreign invaders, not to forever have their small sons working the street as panderers, pimps and drug pushers (and drug use was ubiquitous among GIs in Nam); not to have their daughters made sex toys to pleasure the lust of invaders, who were dutifully raping and killing their country cousins.

Only years later did anyone in the American government admit to the legitimate cause of nationalism among the Vietnamese. To date, and in and out of numerous other wars, I do not know of anyone in government who denounces the moral corruption brought on by the atrocity of strategically victimizing civilians, or who is on record for denouncing the trafficking pornography of foreign occupation. Yet these are the ignored blind spots by which empires fall.

Humanity suffers the oft overwhelming ordeals of history. But humanity has not yet been summarily overcome by the total eclipse of "progressive" war technology. It is not to say that everyone who fought among the Vietnamese was innocent and a hero, or that every American who served over there was a bastard and a villain. But it is worth thinking over how those who had nothing to lose

but their willingness to die were able to endure and ultimately defeat those who so far excelled them in the capacity to destroy life, and afterward to unwind from trauma during R&R vacations in the gambling dins and iniquities of Saigon.

I began this personal essay and meditation with a quotation from Howard Zinn. Because the American government is now at war again (one in the rolling series of patriarchal conflicts, because America is a war making, war profiteering empire), I will end with a few further words from Zinn. Short, starkly honest and poignant, in an essay from 1970 highlighting key differences and consequences between civil obedience and civil disobedience, the historian and peace advocate wrote: *Enemies are people who want to kill us.* Who are the people who start wars but who do not fight them? Who are the people who issue orders to the youth of generations to be transport to faraway places—far from home—and there to kill and be killed? ■


My heart is a Sentinel of Joy. My soul is a Keeper of Freedom. Out of suffering, a one-time victim becomes a full-time person. A person arrives at the threshold of liberation.
DAVID SPARENBERG
Troubadour
and the
Earth on fire

Download for FREE, **HERE!**

Why the war was lost

The outcome of the Vietnam War remains one of the most debated and misunderstood episodes in modern military history. For decades, explanations have oscillated between political betrayal, media influence and battlefield tactics. Yet the deeper truth is more uncomfortable: the United States did not lose simply because of a failure of arms, but because of a failure of understanding of the enemy, of the battlefield and most critically, of the nature of the war itself. This was not a conventional war, and it could not be won with conventional thinking.

Misreading the enemy

At the heart of the American strategic failure was a fundamental misinterpretation of the conflict. U.S. policymakers viewed Vietnam primarily through the lens of the Cold War, a battleground in the global struggle against communism. The "domino theory" dictated urgency; if Vietnam fell, others would follow.

But for many Vietnamese, especially those aligned with Ho Chi Minh, the war was not primarily ideological, it was nationalist. It was a continuation of

decades of resistance against foreign domination; first the French, then the Japanese and now, in their eyes, the Americans.

By framing the war as a fight against communism rather than a struggle for national self-determination, the United States backed itself into a strategic corner. It underestimated the resilience and legitimacy of its opponent, while overestimating the appeal of its own cause among the Vietnamese population.

This misreading shaped every decision that followed.

The attrition trap

American military strategy relied heavily on attrition warfare, the idea that superior firepower and resources could wear down the enemy. Success was measured in "body counts," sorties flown and territory temporarily cleared.

But insurgencies do not operate like conventional armies. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces did not need to win battles; they only needed to avoid defeat.

Every tactical victory, every village cleared, every enemy combatant killed, failed to translate into strategic progress. Why? Because the underlying political reality remained unchanged. The insurgents could recruit faster than they were being eliminated; drawing from a population that often saw them as liberators rather than invaders.

Attrition, in this context, became a self-defeating metric. It created the illusion of progress while masking a deeper stagnation.

The population-centric failure

Counterinsurgency doctrine, as later refined, emphasizes a sim-

ple truth, the population is the center of gravity. Secure the people earn their trust, and the insurgency withers.

In Vietnam the opposite often occurred. Search-and-destroy missions, widespread bombing campaigns and forced relocations alienated rural populations. Programs like "strategic hamlets," intended to isolate civilians from insurgents, frequently disrupted traditional village life and bred resentment.

In many areas the U.S. military could clear territory but it could not hold it without legitimate local governance. And legitimacy was precisely what was lacking.

The war became a revolving door; American forces would enter, engage and withdraw, only for insurgents to return once they left. Without sustained security and political stability, military success proved fleeting.

The weakness of the South Vietnamese state

No counterinsurgency can succeed without a credible partner government. In South Vietnam, that partner was deeply flawed.

The government in Saigon struggled with corruption, factionalism and a lack of popular legitimacy. Many rural Vietnamese viewed it as disconnected, self-serving or even as a continuation of colonial-style rule.

This weakness undermined every American effort. Even when U.S. forces provided security, there was little trust in the institutions meant to replace them. Development projects faltered, reforms stalled, and political instability persisted.

The contrast was stark, while the South Vietnamese government struggled to inspire loyalty, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong offered a coherent, if harsh, vision of unity and independence.

Military power could not compensate for political fragility.

The illusion of airpower

Few lessons from Vietnam are as enduring as this, airpower, no matter how overwhelming, cannot substitute for control on the ground.

The United States unleashed unprecedented bombing campaigns over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Operations like Rolling Thunder were intended to break enemy morale, disrupt supply lines and force political concessions.

They failed to achieve these objectives.

The North Vietnamese adapted, dispersing infrastructure, using

jungle cover and relying on decentralized logistics networks like the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Meanwhile, the bombing often hardened enemy resolve rather than weakening it.

Airpower proved tactically useful but strategically insufficient. It could destroy, but it could not build legitimacy, governance, or trust.

Public will: The ultimate center of gravity

Perhaps the most critical factor was not in Vietnam at all but in the United States.

Wars of this kind are not won solely on the battlefield; they are sustained by public support. Over time, as casualties mounted and

progress remained unclear, American public opinion shifted. The war came to be seen as costly, confusing, and unwinnable.

This erosion of public will translated into political pressure, constraints on military operations, and ultimately a decision to withdraw.

Meanwhile, North Vietnam demonstrated a far greater tolerance for prolonged struggle. Their strategy assumed time was on their side and they were right.

In asymmetric conflicts, the side that is willing to endure longer often prevails.

Strategic lessons for modern history

The lessons of Vietnam are not confined to the past. They echo in later conflicts and remain relevant today:

- Understand the conflict on its own terms. Ideological frameworks can obscure local realities.

- Legitimacy outweighs firepower. Without political credibility, military success is temporary.

- The population is decisive. Winning trust is more important than winning battles.

- External support has limits. A weak partner cannot be propped up indefinitely.

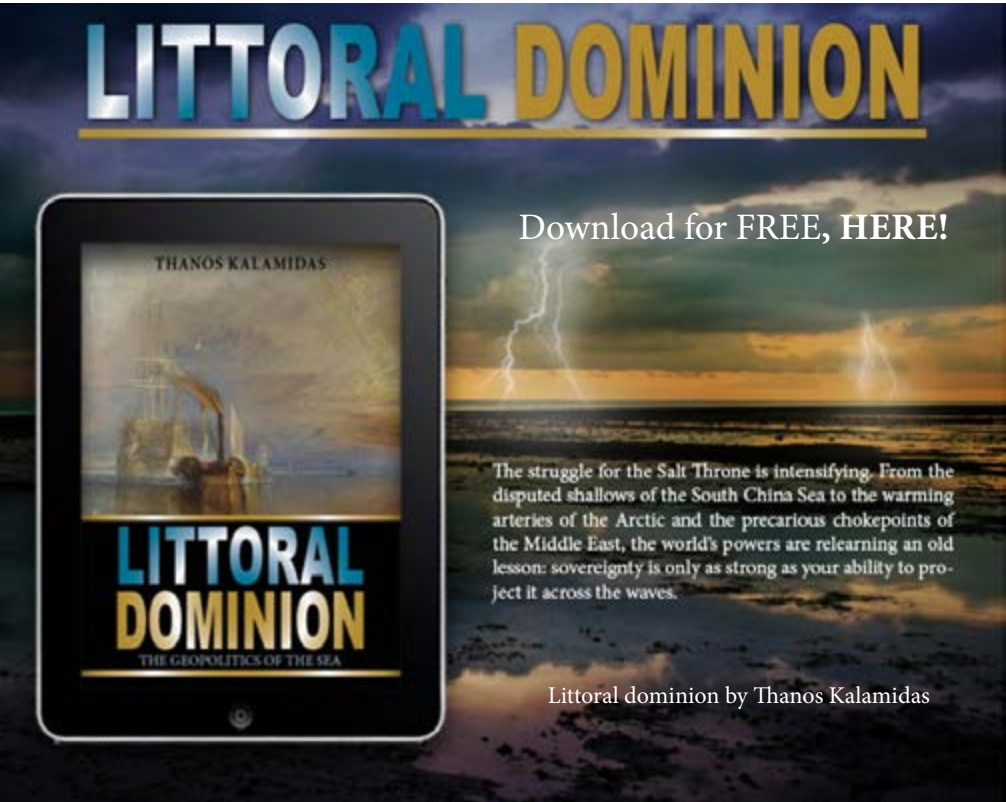
- Public will matters. Democracies must align strategy with sustainable domestic support.

A failure of strategy, not soldiers

It is important to distinguish between the performance of individual soldiers and the decisions of policymakers. American forces fought with discipline, courage and professionalism. The failure lay not in their execution but in the strategy they were given.

The Vietnam War was a mismatch between means and ends, tactics and objectives, perception and reality. It exposed the limits of military power when divorced from political understanding.

In the end, the United States did not simply lose a war, it learned, at great cost, that wars like Vietnam cannot be won by strength alone. They require clarity of purpose, cultural insight, and above all, a strategy grounded in the realities of the people whose future is at stake. ■


LITTORAL DOMINION
THANOS KALAMIDAS
LITTORAL DOMINION
THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE SEA
Download for FREE, HERE!
The struggle for the Salt Throne is intensifying. From the disputed shallows of the South China Sea to the warming arteries of the Arctic and the precarious chokepoints of the Middle East, the world's powers are relearning an old lesson: sovereignty is only as strong as your ability to project it across the waves.
Littoral dominion by Thanos Kalamidas

The "Vietnam Syndrome" vs. the "Reagan Doctrine"

In April 1975 as helicopters lifted the last Americans off the roof of the U.S. embassy during the Fall of Saigon, the United States did not just lose a war, it lost its sense of certainty. For a generation of policymakers, journalists and voters, Vietnam became less a geopolitical episode than a psychological wound. That wound would come to be known as the "Vietnam Syndrome": a deep reluctance to commit American troops abroad, fueled by distrust of government, fear of quagmire and the memory of a war that seemed unwinnable.

Yet within a decade, that restraint gave way to something strikingly different. Under Ronald Reagan, the United States re-embraced military strength, ideological confrontation and global intervention. This shift was not accidental. It was built, paradoxically, on the very defeat that had once discouraged it. The fall of Saigon did not end American interventionism; it transformed and radicalized it, laying the intellectual groundwork for what would become modern neo-conservatism.

The birth of the "Vietnam Syndrome"

The Vietnam War fractured the American political consensus. By the late stages of the conflict, public trust in institutions had collapsed, thanks in part to revelations like the Pentagon Papers and the expanding anti-war movement. The war's human cost, over 58,000 American dead, combined with its ambiguous strategic value to produce a powerful lesson: restraint.

In the late 1970s, this translated into a more cautious foreign policy. Even as crises emerged, from the Iranian Revolution to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the American public remained wary of large-scale military commitments. Congress asserted more authority over war-making, and presidents operated under tighter scrutiny.

This moment of hesitation was not simply fear; it was introspection. Many Americans began to question the premise that the U.S. should act as a global enforcer. The trauma of Vietnam had, at least temporarily, imposed limits.

Rewriting defeat: The "stab-in-the-back" narrative

But defeat rarely remains uncontested. For a rising group of conservative thinkers and politicians, Vietnam was not proof that American power had limits; it was proof that political will had failed.

Here emerged a narrative with deep historical echoes, the idea that the United States did not lose on the battlefield but was betrayed at home. According to this view, military success was undermined by anti-war protests, media criticism and weak political leadership in Washington.

Ronald Reagan became one of the most effective voices of this reinterpretation. Though he did not invent the argument, he refined

it into a political weapon. Vietnam, he suggested, had been a "noble cause" mismanaged and prematurely abandoned.

This framing served a crucial purpose. It allowed conservatives to reject the central lesson of Vietnam, limits on American power without denying the reality of defeat. Instead, it shifted blame from strategy to resolve.

From syndrome to doctrine

When Reagan entered office in 1981, he set out to do more than govern; he aimed to reverse what he saw as a decade of decline. Central to this effort was dismantling the Vietnam Syndrome.

The result was what became known as the Reagan Doctrine: a policy of actively supporting anti-communist insurgencies around the world. Rather than avoiding foreign entanglements, the United States would engage them, indirectly when possible but decisively.

This included backing the Contras in Nicaragua, supporting resistance fighters in Afghanistan, and expanding military aid globally. The doctrine was paired with a massive defence build-up, including increased military spending and a renewed nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union.

The message was clear; America would no longer be paralyzed by past failure.

The rise of neo-conservatism

At the intellectual level, this shift helped consolidate a new ideological movement, neo-conservatism. Figures like Paul Wolfowitz and Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that American power was not just a strategic asset but a moral necessity.

For these thinkers, Vietnam was not a cautionary tale, it was a warning about the dangers of hesitation. The real mistake, they argued, was failing to commit fully to victory.

This perspective reframed intervention as both achievable and desirable, provided it was pursued with clarity and resolve. Over time, it would influence U.S. policy far beyond the Cold War.

From Reagan to the 21st century

The long-term consequences of this ideological shift became evident after the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union appeared to vindicate Reagan's approach, reinforcing the belief that American strength could reshape the world.

By the time of the Iraq War, the logic of the Reagan era had evolved into a more expansive doctrine, the idea that the United States could and should, use military force to promote democracy and secure global stability.

Many of the architects of that war were influenced by the same neoconservative ideas that had taken shape in the aftermath of Vietnam. The shadow of Saigon still lingered but now as a lesson to avoid hesitation, not intervention.

The enduring paradox

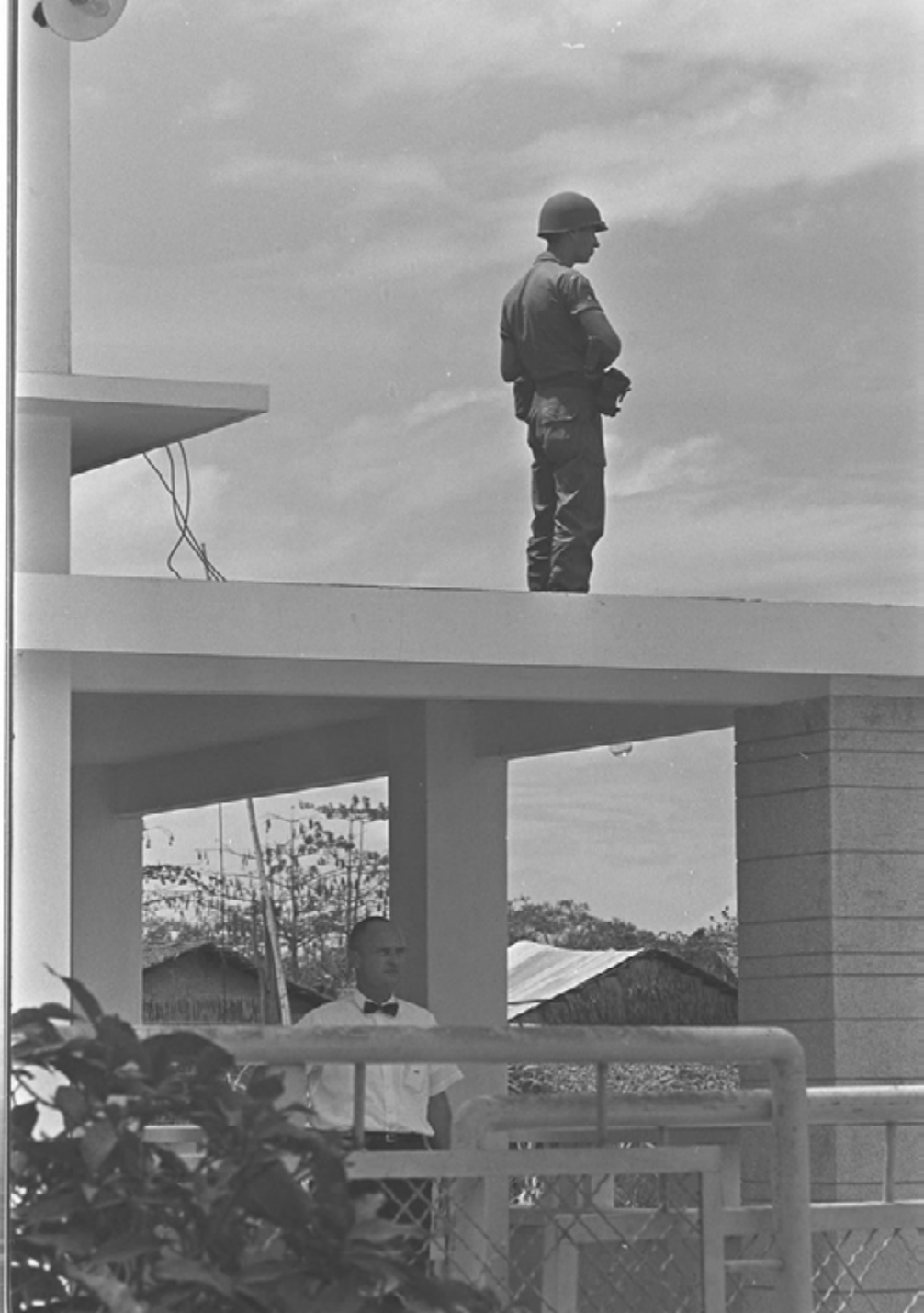
The fall of Saigon should have marked the end of American interventionism. Instead, it became its reinvention.

The Vietnam Syndrome imposed caution, but it also provoked backlash. Reagan and his allies did not simply reject that caution, they turned it into a political liability, arguing that restraint itself was dangerous.

In doing so, they transformed defeat into a rallying cry. The memory of failure became the foundation for renewed assertiveness, reshaping American foreign policy for decades.

This is the enduring paradox: the war that exposed the limits of American power also helped create the ideology that denied those limits ever existed.

And in that paradox lies the blueprint of modern U.S. interventionism. ■



Saigon 1975: A warning for the "forever wars"

History rarely repeats itself verbatim, but it often rhymes. For Americans grappling with the consequences of prolonged military engagements abroad, the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, offers more than a cautionary tale, it is a mirror reflecting decisions, mistakes and moral dilemmas that would re-emerge almost half a century later in Afghanistan. In both cases, the United States faced the collapse of a Western-backed local military, frantic evacuations, and the agonizing abandonment of allies. Saigon, much like Kabul in 2021, forces us to confront the question that haunts every foreign intervention: do we ever truly learn the lesson of when and how to leave?

The collapse of local forces

In April 1975, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) crumbled under the inexorable advance of North Vietnamese forces. Despite years of American military aid, training and advisory support, the ARVN proved incapable of withstanding the final offensive. Analysts at the time debated the reasons: corruption, low morale, poorly equipped units and a leadership disconnected from the realities on the ground.

Fast-forward to 2021 and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) faced a remarkably similar fate. After two decades of U.S. investment in training, equipping and funding the Afghan army, the Taliban swept across the country with astonishing speed once American troops began their withdrawal. Afghan units disintegrated, checkpoints were abandoned and provincial capitals fell with minimal resistance. The parallel is striking, massive external support could not substitute for an internally cohesive, motivated and accountable military structure.

In both Saigon and Kabul, the U.S. underestimated the limits of its influence. Material support alone does not create resilience and leadership rooted in foreign patronage often fails when the patron departs. The lesson is stark, building a military force is not just about dollars and weapons, it is about culture, legitimacy and enduring political will.

Frantic evacuations and the human cost

Perhaps the most searing image of both collapses is the frantic evacuation of civilians who had allied themselves with American forces. In Saigon, helicopters lifted desperate South Vietnamese from rooftops, including the infamous evacuation from the U.S. Embassy. The city's denizens faced the terror of abandonment, watching friends and family vanish into the sky, often never to be seen again.

In Kabul, the chaos was eerily similar. Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport became a bottleneck of panic and fear, with Afghans clinging to planes in a desperate attempt to escape Taliban rule. The United States faced the impossible task of extracting not just its citizens but also thousands of interpreters, human rights workers, and others who had risked their lives supporting Western missions.

These scenes underscore a painful truth: when a military or political project fails, the most vulnerable, the people who trusted the intervening power, suffer first and most profoundly. In both Vietnam and Afghanistan, the moral responsibility to protect allies collided with logistical limits, creating images of panic that will haunt public memory for decades.

Abandonment of allies

The fall of Saigon is often remembered not only as a military defeat but as a profound moral crisis. South Vietnamese civilians, soldiers and officials who had worked with Americans were left to face reprisals, imprisonment and death. The sense of betrayal cut deep, both for those left behind and for Americans who believed in the promise of supporting allies.

The American withdrawal from Afghanistan sparked an almost identical sense of moral anguish. Afghan interpreters, human rights

activists, and vulnerable communities who had placed their trust in the U.S. were left exposed. Critics argue that the withdrawal, while perhaps unavoidable, was executed in a way that amplified the human cost. In both instances, the question lingers: can superpowers ever leave foreign conflicts without leaving a trail of abandoned partners?

Lessons for modern interventionism

The stories of Saigon and Kabul are often told in isolation, but their parallels offer urgent lessons for 21st-century foreign policy:

1. Understand the limits of military power. Weapons, advisors, and air support cannot compensate for a lack of political legitimacy or local cohesion. In both Vietnam and Afghanistan, large-scale external support masked structural weaknesses in local governance and military leadership.

2. Plan exits as strategically as entries. Interventions often focus on objectives and victories but neglect the logistics, politics, and ethics of departure. A hasty or poorly communicated exit amplifies human suffering and damages credibility.

3. Moral responsibility is unavoidable. Allies placed at risk due to American involvement will inevitably judge the U.S. by its willingness to protect them. Failing to plan for their safety undermines both moral authority and long-term strategic interests.

4. Learning requires humility. The U.S. has faced repeated criticism for failing to internalize the lessons of past interventions. From Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan, there is a pattern of entering foreign conflicts with overconfidence and leaving with the messy consequences of underprepared withdrawals.

The question that endures

Saigon's fall should have been a defining lesson in restraint, planning, and moral accountability. Kabul's collapse suggests that, in many ways, the lesson went unheeded. The United States—and other powers engaging in protracted interventions, must confront a difficult truth, wars of choice, particularly those far from home, carry a human and political cost that cannot be fully mitigated. Planning for success is not enough; planning for departure, protection of allies and the limits of influence is equally essential.

History rhymes because human behaviour is consistent. The images of helicopters over Saigon and jets at Kabul airport are separated by decades, but they echo the same lesson: when superpowers intervene abroad, leaving is as consequential as entering. Ignoring that lesson risks repeating history, not in textbooks but in the lives of those who trust in promises they may never see fulfilled.

As we navigate the "forever wars" of the 21st century, from the Middle East to Africa and beyond, Saigon stands as a warning, the art of war is not only how we fight, but how and whether we choose to leave. ■

The diplomatic betrayal

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, marked the end of America's direct military involvement in Vietnam, but the consequences of U.S. policy reverberated far beyond the city's iconic images of helicopters lifting off rooftops. Beyond the dramatic escape of American personnel, hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese soldiers, civil servants and their families faced a far grimmer fate, one that exposed the moral bankruptcy of a policy that claimed to fight for freedom abroad but abandoned allies when expedience demanded it.

For decades, the story of Vietnam has often centered on the United States' strategic failures, the quagmire of war, and the loss of life among American troops. Less discussed is the human cost borne by those who had fought, laboured and risked everything alongside the U.S. the South Vietnamese who trusted in promises that were ultimately hollow. From soldiers who had commanded battalions to civil servants who had administered schools, hospitals, and government agencies, these men and women found themselves unprotected, expendable, and vilified by history.

The human fallout of policy

At the peak of the American evacuation, U.S. helicopters and military transports prioritized American personnel and a narrow subset of South Vietnamese deemed immediately "essential" to U.S. operations. The criteria for evacuation were inconsistent, often arbitrary, and generally favoured Americans over local allies. Soldiers who had fought valiantly against the North Vietnamese, interpreters who had saved countless American lives and civil servants who had kept the machinery of government running were left behind. Estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese were stranded, many of whom were later subjected to imprisonment, re-education or summary execution by the communist regime.

Those who survived faced "re-education camps" prison facilities where detainees endured forced labour, indoctrination and harsh conditions for years. Families were split, careers destroyed and social standing obliterated. The South Vietnamese who had placed their faith in the United States experienced a bitter reality, loyalty to American ideals did not guarantee safety. The moral implications of this abandonment are staggering. When a superpower withdraws, leaving behind its local partners to face retaliation, the ethical cost is immense, not just to those left behind but to the credibility and integrity of the state that makes and breaks such promises.

A critique of U.S. evacuation policy

The U.S. administration's approach to evacuation reflected a narrow calculation of strategic and political priorities. The focus was on saving American lives and American assets, while allies were considered secondary. This approach exposed a systemic failure in both planning and moral responsibility. Many critics have argued that the U.S. could have adopted a more inclusive evacuation policy,

creating broader channels for South Vietnamese soldiers and civil servants, as well as their families, to find refuge abroad.

Instead, the limited and chaotic evacuations contributed to widespread suffering. For those who were evacuated, the process was often harrowing, leaving permanent psychological scars. For those left behind, the consequences were even more severe. The United States' selective approach to rescue inadvertently reinforced a narrative in which local partners were expendable, a dangerous precedent for any foreign policy that relies on local alliances in conflict zones.

Regional consequences

The abandonment of South Vietnamese allies also reshaped the region. Vietnam itself became a country marked by mass emigration and societal trauma. Boat people fled in the thousands, creating humanitarian crises across Southeast Asia. Neighbouring countries, including Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, faced the difficult task of accommodating large numbers of refugees, straining resources and creating political friction.

Moreover, the perception of American unreliability had long-term consequences for U.S. alliances in the region. Governments and populations in countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and later Cambodia and Laos, became acutely aware that alignment with U.S. policy offered no ironclad guarantee of protection. This legacy of mistrust shaped diplomatic interactions in Southeast Asia for decades, complicating efforts to form coalitions and pursue regional stability.

The moral and political cost

The diplomatic betrayal of America's South Vietnamese allies raises fundamental questions about the intersection of policy and morality. On a human level, it represents an unfulfilled promise, a failure to uphold a commitment to those who had risked life and limb for a shared cause. On a political level, it eroded credibility, if American promises are contingent, selective or temporary, allies and adversaries alike learn to plan accordingly.

This failure resonates even today. Modern debates over foreign

interventions and alliance obligations, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, often echo the lessons of Vietnam. Local partners in conflict zones remain at risk when evacuations or protection are limited, selective, or politically calculated. The question persists: can the United States or any power, justify policies that place expedience over human obligation?

Remembering the forgotten

While the images of American helicopters fleeing rooftops have been immortalized, the stories of those left behind remain underrepresented in history books and public consciousness. Veterans, families and ordinary civil servants who once served the South Vietnamese state continue to bear the scars of this betrayal. Some were resettled in the United States decades later, but many never recovered from imprisonment, poverty and social displacement. Their experience is a haunting reminder that foreign policy is not merely a matter of strategy, it is a moral undertaking with consequences for real lives.

History should remember that America's defeat in Vietnam was not only a military or political failure; it was also a failure of ethical responsibility. The South Vietnamese who trusted in U.S. protection were sacrificed, their faith repaid with abandonment. As policymakers consider future interventions and alliances, the lessons of 1975 remain clear: strategic expedience cannot and must not, come at the cost of human loyalty.

America's allies deserve better, not just in rhetoric but in action. The moral debt owed to South Vietnam is one that history will not easily forgive. ■

The ghost of Saigon

The shadow of Saigon stretches long over American foreign policy. When the last U.S. helicopters lifted off from the roof of the American Embassy in April 1975, the United States was forced to confront a harsh reality, a superpower could be militarily superior yet fail to achieve its political objectives. The Fall of Saigon was more than the dramatic end of the Vietnam War; it became a defining moment that would haunt Washington's strategic imagination for decades, particularly in the Middle East. The ghost of Saigon has shaped doctrine, decision-making, and the persistent tension between military might and political will.

Vietnam as the mirror of strategic failure

The Vietnam War remains America's most cautionary tale of overreach. Despite technological superiority, massive troop deployments, and relentless firepower, the U.S. could not compel North Vietnam to capitulate. This failure was not merely tactical; it was fundamentally strategic. Vietnam exposed the limits of conventional military power

in achieving nation-building objectives, and it highlighted the domestic constraints that democratic societies impose on sustained military engagements. The American public, shocked by images of helicopters fleeing rooftops and cities falling to the communists, demanded clarity, restraint, and purpose in future interventions.

This national trauma gave birth to a profound strategic conservatism. Military leaders and policymakers became obsessed with avoiding "another Vietnam." The lessons learned were codified in doctrine and practice: intervene decisively or not at all, define objectives clearly, and ensure the American people can understand and support the mission. The fear of quagmire would dominate the next half-century of U.S. strategy.

The Powell doctrine

The first major incarnation of this post-Vietnam thinking was the Powell Doctrine, articulated by General Colin Powell and his mentor, General Norman Schwarzkopf. The doctrine emphasized that U.S. military engagement should occur only with:

1. A clear and attainable objective.
2. Overwhelming force to achieve decisive victory.
3. Broad public and congressional support.
4. A defined exit strategy to avoid prolonged entanglement.

The Gulf War of 1990–1991 exemplified the Powell Doctrine in action. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the United States built an unprecedented coalition and employed a massive, technologically advanced force to expel Iraqi troops in just six weeks. The operation's brevity and clarity allowed the U.S. to declare victory, minimize casualties, and return home with public support intact.

For a moment, it seemed as if the lessons of Saigon had been fully internalized: overwhelming force combined with political clarity could prevent a quagmire.

Iraq and Afghanistan: lessons unlearned

Yet the shadow of Saigon also produces more insidious effects. The same fear of repetition, of "losing" militarily or politically, can produce paralysis. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the U.S. swiftly toppled Saddam Hussein's regime with overwhelming force, echoing Powell's principles. But the post-invasion strategy faltered, the United States lacked a coherent plan for nation-building, underestimated sectarian divisions and faced an insurgency that could not be crushed by firepower alone. The consequences were long, costly, and politically destabilizing.

The fear of "another Vietnam" paradoxically contributed to a reluctance to withdraw from both Iraq and Afghanistan. Policymakers, haunted by images of Saigon, equated withdrawal with defeat. Even when the wars became increasingly unpopular, American leaders hesitated to cut losses, believing that leaving prematurely would signal weakness to adversaries. In Afghanistan, this fear extended for nearly two decades, with U.S. forces staying long after the initial objectives, removing al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, had been largely achieved. The shadow of Vietnam, meant to prevent quagmires, arguably produced its own prolonged entanglements.

Strategic implications for the Middle East today

The ghost of Saigon continues to influence U.S. military and political behaviour in the Middle East. Policymakers remain sensitive to the optics of retreat, measured against historical memory, while simultaneously cautious about committing troops

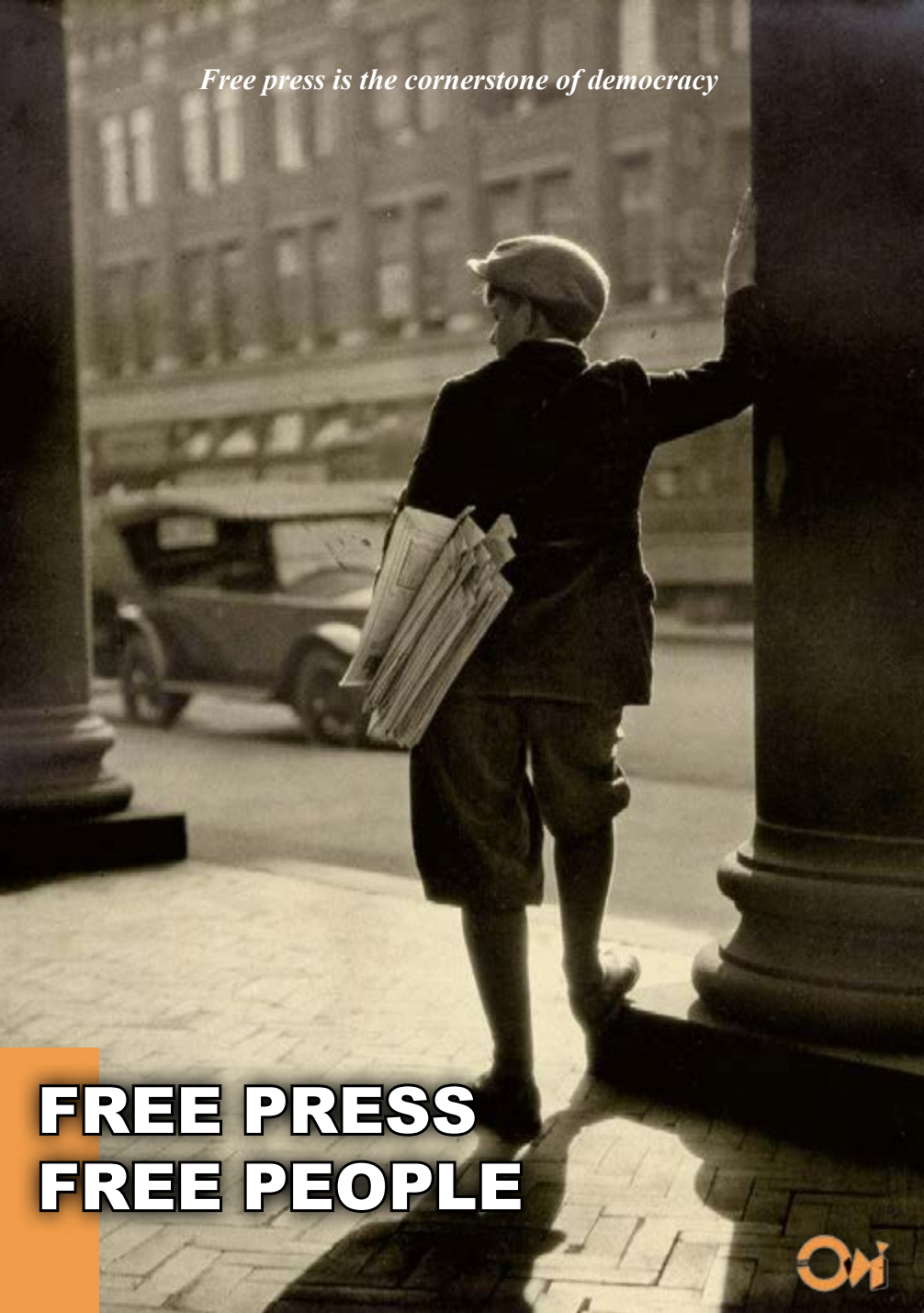
without clear exit strategies. This duality complicates the calculus of intervention: the U.S. seeks to avoid both protracted wars and the appearance of weakness.

Yet modern conflicts, terrorist networks, asymmetric warfare, hybrid threats, cannot always be resolved through overwhelming conventional force alone. The insistence on decisive victory and defined timelines, born from Vietnam trauma, often clashes with the messy realities on the ground. Saigon's lessons, therefore, are double-edged: they instill prudence but also create risk aversion that can prolong engagements, generate strategic ambiguity, and hinder flexibility.

Reconciling memory and modernity

The Fall of Saigon left an indelible mark on U.S. military doctrine. It forged an obsession with avoiding quagmires that shaped the Powell Doctrine and the Gulf War's stunning victory. Yet it also instilled a fear of perceived defeat that complicated subsequent interventions, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan. For modern U.S. strategy, the challenge is not merely remembering Saigon but reconciling memory with reality. Avoiding quagmires should not become a pretext for indefinite involvement; nor should fear of public opinion prevent strategic recalibration.

As the United States faces a Middle East still rife with instability, the ghost of Saigon is a reminder that military might is not a substitute for political clarity. The lesson is nuanced: decisive action requires not only overwhelming force but also honest assessment of objectives, limits, and long-term consequences. History does not merely teach, it warns. And in the Middle East, that warning echoes louder than ever. ■


Free press is the cornerstone of democracy
FREE PRESS
FREE PEOPLE

Could the fall have been prevented?

On April 30, 1975, the last remnants of the South Vietnamese government crumbled beneath the relentless advance of the North Vietnamese Army. Images of helicopters lifting desperate Americans and South Vietnamese from the rooftop of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon are etched into the collective memory of a nation and a war that defined a generation. Historians and policy analysts have long debated the inevitability of the fall of Saigon, but one question continues to haunt the corridors of American foreign policy, could it have been prevented?

To understand this counterfactual, we must first revisit the political and military landscape of South Vietnam in the final year of the war. By early 1974, the South Vietnamese state was already under immense strain. Corruption was rampant and political infighting had sapped the legitimacy of the central government in Saigon. President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's administration, while ostensibly committed to resisting the communist advance, struggled to inspire either confidence or unity. Morale within the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had

been deteriorating for years, exacerbated by a war-weariness that no injection of American firepower could easily reverse.

Yet it was the decisive actions of the U.S. Congress in 1974 that arguably accelerated the collapse. Following the Watergate scandal and growing domestic opposition to the war, Congress cut off most military aid to South Vietnam. The last tranche of funds was insufficient to maintain ARVN operational capacity. The ripple effect was immediate: units went without ammunition, heavy artillery maintenance fell behind, and the logistical lifelines that kept a nation at war began to fail. Without U.S. financial and material support, South Vietnam's strategic options narrowed to nothing.

Some analysts argue that a last-minute infusion of American resources, be it additional B-52 strikes, rapid-deployment advisors or financial support, could have delayed the inevitable. Hypothetically, sustained air campaigns over North Vietnamese supply lines and frontline positions might have slowed their momentum, buying time for the South Vietnamese to regroup. Similarly, increased military aid could have shored up the ARVN, restoring at least a measure of operational confidence and tactical capability.

However, this perspective risks overstating the power of material aid while underestimating the deeper structural rot within South Vietnam. By 1975, the political cohesion necessary for a protracted defence was largely absent. Even with additional B-52 strikes, North Vietnamese forces enjoyed superior morale, political unity, and logistical coordination. A government plagued by corruption, nepotism and parochial rivalries cannot simply be revitalized with bombs or cash.

Consider the psychological dimension. Reports from ARVN officers in the final months describe units disintegrating upon first contact with advancing communist troops. Desertions were

rampant, often before actual combat occurred. Commanders at multiple levels expressed frustration at the lack of political will from Saigon to implement meaningful reforms or respond decisively to crises. These failures were not merely tactical but structural, pointing to a regime whose collapse may have been preordained by internal decay as much as by external pressure.

Moreover, the North Vietnamese strategic advantage was not solely military; it was ideological and political. Their leadership, especially figures like General Văn Tiến Dũng, understood the importance of exploiting South Vietnamese vulnerabilities. Propaganda campaigns aimed at both the ARVN and civilian population eroded trust in the South Vietnamese government while simultaneously strengthening the image of the communist alternative. No amount of U.S. financial aid could have countered this pervasive influence in the short window remaining.

The counterfactual scenario of an American surge in 1975 also raises difficult questions about domestic politics. After the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, U.S. public opinion had firmly turned against involvement in Vietnam. Any attempt to commit additional troops or conduct extensive air strikes would have faced severe political resistance, potentially igniting a constitutional or public crisis in the United States itself. Congress was unlikely to provide such support,

meaning the theoretical infusion of aid may have been politically impossible even if strategically desirable.

Ultimately, the fall of Saigon was the intersection of external withdrawal and internal decay. The sudden severing of U.S. aid illuminated the fragility of a state that had long relied on external support to sustain itself. While some tactical delays or short-term military advantages might have been possible with continued intervention, they likely would have only postponed the inevitable collapse. The South Vietnamese political system, heavily reliant on patronage and lacking institutional resilience, was ill-equipped to survive the pressures imposed by both a determined adversary and the loss of its primary benefactor.

The lesson of Saigon resonates today as a cautionary tale of the limits of foreign intervention. Military power and financial aid, while critical in supporting fragile allies, cannot compensate for systemic governance failures. In Saigon's case, the U.S. withdrawal exposed an underlying weakness that had been decades in the making, proving that wars are not won solely with bombs or dollars but through the enduring strength of institutions, leadership, and the collective morale of a people.

In the end, the specter of Saigon is not merely a historical footnote but a reminder that intervention, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot replace the fundamentals of political legitimacy. While the question of whether Saigon could have been saved invites endless speculation, the evidence suggests that the fall was not merely a failure of foreign policy but the tragic denouement of a deeply flawed political system, one whose collapse may have been unavoidable regardless of the actions of distant allies. ■

We cover every issue
for 22 years
The Ovi
https://realovi.wordpress.com/

Is the U.S. staring at another Saigon in the Persian Gulf?

The specter of another American quagmire in the Middle East is looming larger than ever. Under former President Donald Trump, U.S. policy toward Iran took on a confrontational, high-stakes posture reminiscent of earlier moments in American history, particularly the Vietnam War. The recent assassination of Qassem Soleimani, combined with the maximum-pressure campaign on Tehran, has raised urgent questions, is Washington repeating mistakes that history already catalogued in blood? Could the Persian Gulf become the site of a modern Saigon?

The fall of Saigon in 1975 remains an enduring symbol of American hubris, miscalculation, and the human cost of entanglement. The United States entered Vietnam with confidence in technological superiority and political resolve, only to be drawn into a conflict it could not decisively win. Decades later, the lessons of that war remain relevant, especially when evaluating the Trump administration's approach to Iran.

Parallels of entanglement

At its core, the Vietnam War was about the United States projecting power beyond its borders to enforce ideological priorities. In the Trump era, Iran became a target for a similar form of projection, the maximum-pressure campaign sought to coerce Tehran economically and politically, while the administration flirted with the possibility of military strikes. Much like the early 1960s in Southeast Asia, U.S. leaders seemed convinced that decisive action, whether through air campaigns or targeted strikes, could deliver quick results. History, however, warns against such assumptions.

The assassination of Soleimani in January 2020 was emblematic of this approach. A carefully orchestrated act of force, it was intended to signal American dominance and deter further Iranian provocations. Yet, it also carried the risk of drawing the United States into a spiral of retaliation. Just as the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 escalated a limited engagement into a full-scale war, a targeted killing in Tehran or Baghdad could easily have catalyzed a much broader conflict.

Air power vs. ground realities

Trump's advisers, echoing lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, assumed that modern precision strikes could neutralize Iranian capabilities without requiring boots on the ground. Air power, the argument went, could cripple Tehran's nuclear infrastructure and military assets while limiting American casualties. But history offers caution, in Vietnam, strategic bombing of North Vietnam, the famous "Rolling Thunder" campaign, failed to produce the intended political outcomes. North Vietnam's resilience, coupled with the difficulty of translating air superiority into decisive political leverage, underscores a stark reality, without a viable ground strategy, bombing alone rarely achieves lasting results.

In Iran's case, the limits of air power are even more pronounced. The country's geography, urban density and decentralized military infrastructure make it difficult to strike decisively. Further, Iran's capacity for asymmetric warfare, through proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, means that American forces could find themselves embroiled in protracted conflicts without ever confronting the regime directly. The lessons of Vietnam are clear, technological supremacy does not guarantee political victory.

The challenge of regime change

One of the hallmarks of the Trump administration's Iran strategy was an implicit belief in the possibility of regime change. Sanctions, diplomatic isolation and military intimidation were tools designed to destabilize the Iranian government, theoretically paving the way for a more compliant leadership. This mirrors the American mindset during the Vietnam War, when leaders believed that military pressure could compel North Vietnam to adopt policies favourable to the United States.

But regime change, especially in complex societies with deep ideological convictions, is notoriously difficult. Iran is not North Korea, but it shares a similar resilience against external coercion. Its revolutionary institutions, popular support for certain regime elements and experience with foreign intervention make a rapid political transformation unlikely. Vietnam taught Americans that local nationalism can withstand decades of external pressure; Iran, with its history of resisting foreign domination, may prove equally intractable.

Political will and the American psyche

Perhaps the most important lesson from Saigon is the question of American political will. The United States waged a decade-long war

in Vietnam, costing more than 58,000 American lives and millions of Vietnamese, before public opinion forced withdrawal. Could contemporary U.S. politics sustain a similar commitment in the Persian Gulf?

Under Trump, the appetite for long-term engagement seems limited. The president's focus on "America First" and his desire to reduce overseas commitments suggested that, even if conflict escalated, the administration might lack the patience for a protracted war. Yet, a miscalculation in Tehran or Baghdad could compel extended military operations that the American public and Congress would find increasingly unacceptable. The gulf between military objectives and political will is the essence of the Vietnam trap: even a tactical victory can become a strategic nightmare if the home front refuses the necessary endurance.

Lessons for modern history

As historians and policymakers examine Trump's Iran strategy, the cautionary tale of Vietnam looms large. The parallels are striking, a desire to project power, reliance on technology over boots on the ground, underestimation of local resilience, and the fragility of political will. Yet, unlike Vietnam, the Persian Gulf sits at the nexus of global energy markets, regional rivalries, and nuclear concerns, amplifying the stakes. A misstep in Iran could reverberate far beyond Washington and Tehran, destabilizing an entire region and drawing in allies and adversaries alike.

The lesson is simple yet profound, history is not destiny but it offers a map of potential pitfalls. A strategy that underestimates local dynamics, overestimates coercive power, and ignores the limits of domestic support is unlikely to succeed. The question for American policymakers is not whether Iran is a threat, but whether the United States has learned the lessons of Saigon well enough to avoid repeating them.

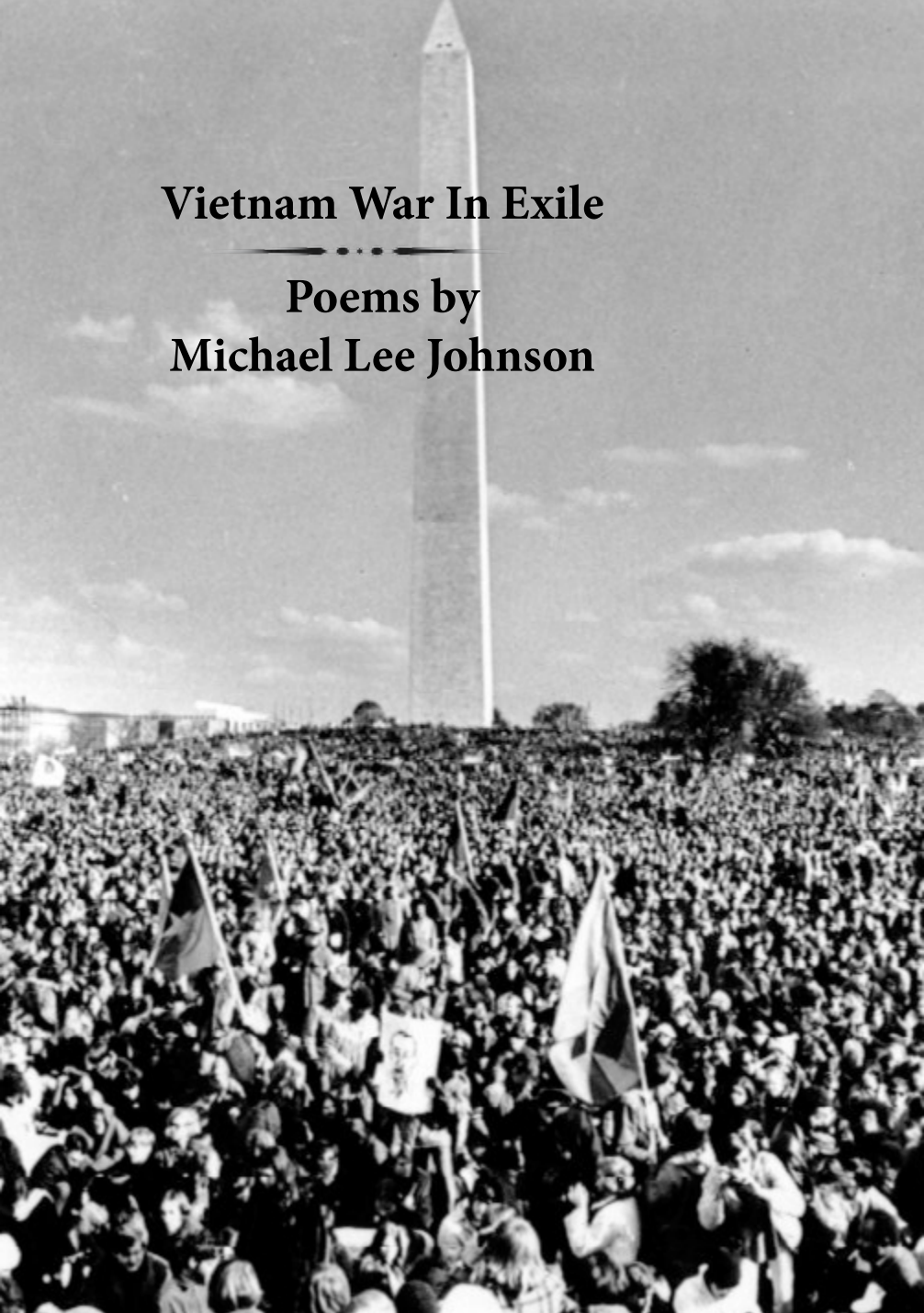
Trump's confrontational stance toward Iran invites a difficult but necessary reflection on the limits of American power. History, particularly the fall of Saigon, offers a stark warning, quick strikes, air campaigns and the illusion of control cannot substitute for a coherent, sustainable strategy grounded in political, cultural, and military realities. Without this, the United States risks becoming entangled in another costly, protracted conflict, this time in the Persian Gulf, with consequences as severe, if not greater, than those witnessed in Southeast Asia.

The Persian Gulf may not yet be a Saigon but the echoes of history are unmistakable. Ignoring them could prove a fatal miscalculation. ■

Download for FREE, HERE!
RICHARD STANFORD
The Informant
His notebook was full of shorthand transcripts of phone conversations. It had been one of those 'nothing-is-ready-days', panic to deadline, reporters lost in traffic. But they had managed to put the late edition to bed.
The Informant
by Richard Stanford

Vietnam War In Exile

Poems by
Michael Lee Johnson



If I Were Young Again (V8)

**Note: This poem was written while in exile in Canada during the Vietnam War era.*

Piecemeal summer dies.
Long winter spreads its blanket again.

For ten years, I have lived in exile,
locked in this rickety cabin, shoulders
jostled up against the open Alberta sky.

If I were young again, I'd sing of the coolness of high
mountain snow flowers sprinkled with glow-blue meadows.
I would dream and stretch slim fingers into a distant nowhere,
yawning slowly over endless prairie miles.

The grassland is where, in summer, silence grows.
In the evening, eagles spread their wings,
dripping feathers like warm honey.

If I were young again, I'd eat pinecones and food from birds.
Share meals with wild wolves.
I'd have as much dessert as I wanted,
reach out into the blue sky, lick the clouds off my fingertips.

But I'm not young anymore, and my thoughts tormented
are raw, overworked, sharpened with misery
from the torture of war and childhood.
For ten years now, I've lived locked in this unstable cabin,

inside rush of summer winds,
outside air beat dim with snow.

Blueprint in Exile

(So Many Years Ago-Vietnam War)

**After all these years, poems from exile, Vietnam War still return to my memory—some embrace me with love; others haunt me with their bitterness.*

Blueprint from my heart.
The long road north.
Begins in exile.
Snow clings tenaciously to my boots.
My life drifts in Toronto.
My suitcase holds missing faces.
No address but the road.
No home letters sent.
Pain builds in layers.
Each day, an acid trip of unbelief.
No AI, no cellphones, no barcodes.
No smartphone apps, only the
New Testament prayers keep me company,
alone on the cold nights.
Home is my station wagon.
Hot songs about home play on the radio.
Sleeping in my station wagon, muted by the cold.
Notes at night tremble in my cold hands.

Exile is a lover, distant and unfulfilling.
I'm a wanted, wounded soldier.
Build a heart, a pacemaker.
Belief intrudes on heart space,
persistence, and facilitation.
Daddy's strength wanes,
mother's gaze was laden with worry.
These passing years echo across time.
Emotions thrum within my body, longing
for home, faith, lack of, or even hope.
Test me for rhythm, a musical note, remember.
Record my surges, my tranquil nights in prayer.
Pulse is proof that all things in the heart pass.
Time points to everything left behind.
All things left behind will eventually return home.

Skinny Indiana Boy (V3)

**A draft resister returns home and finds quiet acceptance.*

With a heart as big as Texas
or Alberta, where he came from.
The draft resister tries to erase
the memory of his sordid past.
Coming out of the Rockies, over
slate, leaving self-imposed exile.
He leaves the northland, shaking
his bandaged fists at the prairie sky.
Robbed of conviction by a war
that ended and others forgot.
He found nothing left to wait or die for,
no more signs to carry in the dark.
Only the chill of the northern winter
left to remind him of the aching warmth
he once carried, words now stranded in his throat.
The night looked long in his deep green
eyes robbing his faint life away.
The scream of loneliness has turned.
His loneliness wrings his insides,
pity blooming sharp as frost.

Non-religious except in weakened moments,
empty nights, vacant lots; he leaves behind
ten lightless years of silent wars without refuge.
He no longer speaks with bleeding bullets,
nor searches whispers echoing in the pines.
Now, finally, he is at home, comforted
by the quiet of the Indiana lakes.
Where, in his childhood, he created
the vision for his now dead dream.
At last, the urge to shout has mellowed.
Turned to silent contentment, acceptance.
Just glad to be alive.

Wings Tipped and Resisting (V2)

**The poem traces a young man's coming of age against the backdrop of a conflicted nation.*

It made sense to watch him grow—
the foolish things he did to girls,
the endless hours he filled their
bedrooms with delight—I swear.
He was an Indiana boy.
He served as a whisper of dreams and words.
The pines of Alberta fanned his restless brain.
His conviction blazed brighter as he grew.
Each year, the voices of many personalities
formed in his larynx, fashioned by the early
Indiana years.
His convictions were twisted and convoluted.
New ideas are growing quickly in his brain like
plants.
They pressed through his mind, changing sands.
They spread as far as eagle wings in flight.
Words stumbled in his larynx over the early
Indiana years.
It was a tangle growing unchecked, incurable.
The wind stopped praying the day he was born.

He felt his own creation lift within his breath.
More than old or new longing, or resonances of World War II murmuring.
In the background, this boy was a declaration of independence.
With potential rejected by his peers, those muted echoes.
His unspoken expectations within his own breath.
Then a war came—the Vietnam curse. It tore the nation,
leaving people hurting, and burning, stealing dreams for a future.
In the past, this boy was a symbol of patriotism.
Then men died, weekly, thousands of men died.
Blue north wind now blows icicles through his hippie hair.
He works against the wings of the red, white, and blue eagle.
Blood-torn stars blend in his green eyes.
Two discordant nations divide his border.

His future existence
depends on your
present presence.

fiction

Last flight from a burning city by Mike Nomads

The first explosion sounded like the sky itself had cracked open. Linh froze. For a moment, the world around her, vendors shouting, bicycles clattering, soldiers yelling, collapsed into a ringing silence that pressed hard against her ears. Then the screaming began. “Linh!”

Her brother’s voice cut through everything.

She turned sharply. Minh stood a few steps behind her, clutching the sleeve of her worn blouse, his wide eyes reflecting flames from somewhere down the street.

“I’m here,” she said quickly, forcing calm into her voice. “Don’t let go. Whatever happens, you don’t let go, understand?”

He nodded, though his lower lip trembled. “Are they coming?” Another burst of gunfire answered him. Closer this time.

Linh swallowed. “Yes.”

* * * * * * * * * *

They moved with the crowd, carried by panic more than direction. Saigon was no longer a city; it was a living thing in agony. People ran in every direction, clutching children, dragging suitcases, abandoning everything that couldn't be carried in their hands.

A military truck roared past, nearly clipping a man who stumbled into its path. No one stopped to help him when he fell. "Stay close!" Linh snapped, tightening her grip on Minh's wrist.

"I'm scared," he whispered. "So am I," she admitted. "But we're getting out."

"Like Mama said?" Linh hesitated.

Their mother's last words echoed in her mind, 'go to the river. Find the man with the blue scarf. He will take you away.'

She had no idea if the man even existed. But it was all they had.

* * * * * * * * * * *

They turned into a side street to avoid the soldiers rushing forward. The alley smelled of smoke and sewage, the walls closing in like a trap.

Minh tugged her hand. "Why are we going this way?"

"Because everyone else isn't."

"That's not a good reason."

"It is today."

A sharp crack echoed behind them. Linh shoved Minh against the wall just as a bullet struck the brick where his head had been a second before.

He gasped. She pressed a hand over his mouth. “Quiet.” Footsteps approached. Heavy. Measured. Not running. Not panicked.

Linh’s heart pounded. She risked a glance around the corner.

Two men in mismatched uniforms walked slowly through the chaos, rifles raised, not firing wildly like the others, but aiming. Looking. Hunting.

She pulled back immediately. “Who are they?” Minh whispered against her palm.

“Not soldiers,” she murmured. “Or not just soldiers.”

One of the men spoke, his voice calm despite the madness around him. “The girl is about fifteen. The boy is younger. Orders are clear, bring them alive.”

Minh’s fingers tightened around hers. “They’re talking about us,” he breathed.

“Yes.”

“Why?” Linh didn’t answer.

Because she already knew.

* * * * * * * * * *

Their father had been a quiet man. Too quiet.

He worked nights, met strangers, burned papers in the backyard when he thought no one was watching. Two weeks ago, he had disappeared.

Three days later, their mother had handed Linh a small wrapped

package.

"Don't open it," she had said. "No matter what happens."

Now, as the men's footsteps drew closer, Linh felt the weight of that package hidden beneath her shirt. Whatever it was, people were willing to kill for it. Or worse.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Run," she whispered. They bolted down the alley. Shouts erupted behind them. Gunfire followed.

The world became a blur, turns taken blindly, bodies pushed aside, doors slammed shut in their faces. Minh stumbled once, and Linh dragged him back to his feet before he could fall.

"Faster!"

"I can't...!"

"You can!" They burst out into a wider street near the river. And chaos became something else entirely.

Helicopters thundered overhead, descending toward rooftops crowded with desperate people. Boats jammed the riverbank, overloaded, some already sinking under the weight of those trying to escape.

"Linh…" Minh's voice was small. "There's too many." She scanned the crowd wildly.

Then she saw it. A man standing near a battered wooden boat, a faded blue scarf tied loosely around his neck. Her breath caught. "That's him."

"Are you sure?"

"No."

"That's not ...nice."

"Move!"

* * * * * * * * * * *

They pushed toward the river, slipping between people, ignoring the cries and pleas around them.

"Please! Take my baby!"

"Just one more!"

"Help us!"

Linh kept her eyes forward.

If she stopped, even for a second, they would never make it. They reached the boat. The man with the blue scarf looked at them sharply. "You're late."

"We came as fast as we could," Linh said. "My mother..."

"I know who your mother is." His gaze flicked to Minh. "And your father."

Linh stiffened. "Then you know why we're here."

"Yes." He gestured to the boat. "Get in." A gunshot cracked behind them. The two men from the alley were pushing through the crowd, closer now.

"Now!" Linh urged. They climbed into the boat.

The man started the engine.

For a moment, just a moment, it seemed like they might make it.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Then the man turned, his expression unreadable. "Give it to me."

Linh blinked. "What?"

"The package."

Her stomach dropped. "I don't..."

"Don't lie to me, girl." His voice hardened. "Your father trusted me with this operation. That means I know exactly what you're carrying."

Minh looked between them, confused. "Linh?"

She hesitated.

Behind them, the two men reached the riverbank.

Rifles raised. Waiting. Not firing. Watching. "They're not trying to stop us," Minh said slowly.

"No," the man with the blue scarf agreed. "They're not."

Linh felt the truth settle like ice in her chest.

"They're with you," she said.

The man gave a faint smile. "Very good."

"You're not here to help us escape."

"I'm here to make sure that what your father stole doesn't leave the country."

Minh's voice trembled. "Linh… what's going on?" She didn't answer.

Her mind raced. Two sides. Same goal. The package. Her father had never been working for one side. He'd been playing both. And now they were the last loose ends.

* * * * * * * * * * *

The man extended his hand. "Give it to me, and I might let the boy live."

"Don't listen to him!" Minh cried.

Linh slowly reached beneath her shirt. Pulled out the package. It was smaller than it should have been. Lighter.

She looked at it. Then back at him. And smiled. "You should have checked it sooner," she said.

His eyes narrowed. "What?"

She tossed it to him. He caught it, immediately tearing it open. Inside... Nothing.

Just folded scraps of blank paper. The man's face went still.

"Where is it?" he asked quietly.

Linh met his gaze. "Safe." Gunfire erupted. But not from the riverbank. From the rooftops.

The man jerked as bullets struck him, the package falling from his hands. The two men onshore dropped seconds later, taken down with precise, efficient shots.

Minh screamed.

Linh grabbed him, pulling him low as chaos exploded again around them.

Figures moved along the rooftops, unseen allies or new enemies, she couldn't tell.

"Linh... what's happening?!"

She stared at the river, at the boats, at the helicopters lifting into the smoke-filled sky.

Then she looked down at her brother.

And for the first time, she told him the truth.

"I don't know."

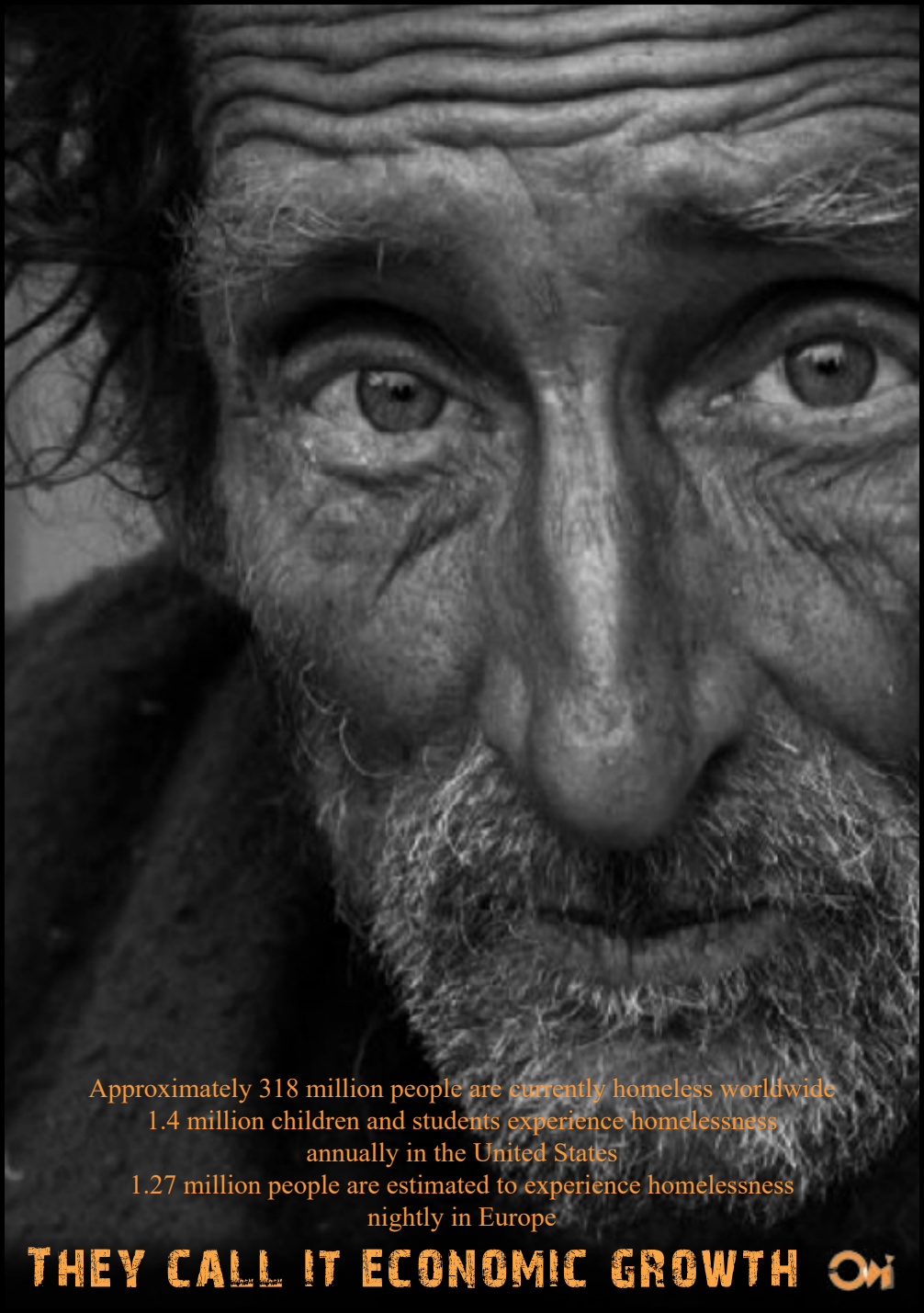
* * * * * * * * * * *

The boat drifted loose from the dock, carried by the current.

Behind them, Saigon burned. Ahead, the river stretched into uncertainty. Minh clung to her. "Are we going to be okay?"

Linh watched the city fade. Then, very quietly, she said, "that depends on who finds us next."

The End


Approximately 318 million people are currently homeless worldwide
1.4 million children and students experience homelessness
annually in the United States
1.27 million people are estimated to experience homelessness
nightly in Europe
THEY CALL IT ECONOMIC GROWTH

April in history

April 2, 1982
Argentina invades the Falklands

On this day in 1982, troops from Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a South Atlantic archipelago that is a colony of the UK. The move sparked a ten-week conflict known as the Falklands War, at the end of which the UK emerged victorious. ■

April 12, 1961

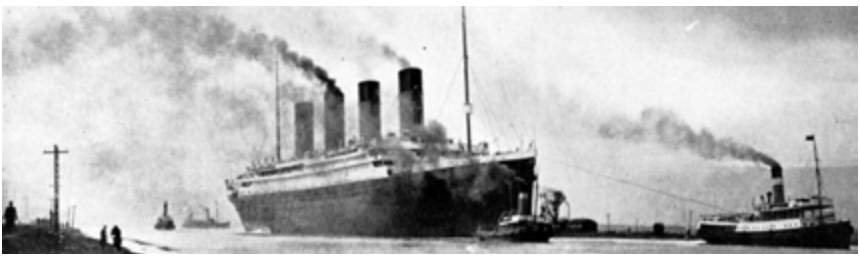
Yuri Gagarin becomes the first man in space

Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, flew into space aboard the Soviet spacecraft Vostok I. In doing so, he became the first human being to have ventured into the black void. ■

April 30, 1963
The Bristol Bus Boycott begins

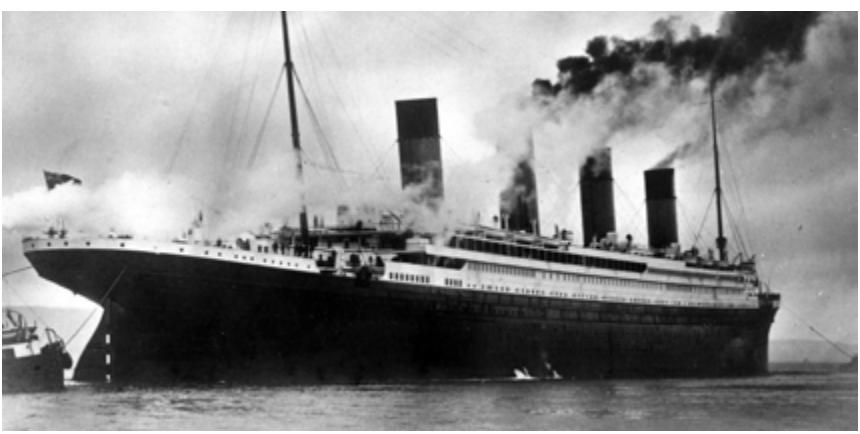
By 1963, the state-owned Bristol Omnibus Company was yet to employ a single non-white driver or conductor in its network. The Bristol Bus Boycott, spearheaded by the West Indian Development Council (WIDC), was a watershed moment in black British history that led to meaningful change in the country's discrimination laws. ■

April 15, 1912
The Titanic sinks



In 1912, the Titanic, hailed as an "unsinkable" luxury liner, set sail from England to New York. Aboard were wealthy elites and poor immigrants dreaming of a new life. Four days into the voyage, lookouts spotted a massive iceberg dead ahead.

Despite frantic maneuvers, the ship's steel side was fatally gashed. Water poured into compartments, pulling the bow down. As panic erupted, crew launched lifeboats, but there were far too few for the 2,200 aboard. Women and children boarded first. The ship's band played calming



hymns. At 2:20 a.m., the great vessel snapped in two and vanished into the freezing Atlantic. Over 1,500 people perished in the icy water.

The Carpathia rescued only 705 survivors. The tragedy exposed hubris and flawed safety rules, leading to sweeping maritime reforms. Today, the Titanic rests on the ocean floor, a haunting monument to human ambition and its fragile limits. ■

Ovi History
Issue 18 - April 2026
Saigon falls

Ovi Thematic/History eMagazines
Publications 2026

Design: Thanos

An Ovi eBooks Publication
© 2026 Ovi eBookPublications - All material is copyright of the Ovi eBooks Publications & the writer

Ovi Thematic/History Magazines are available in
Ovi/Ovi ThematicMagazines and OviPedia pages
in all forms PDF/ePub/mobi, and they are always FREE.
If somebody tries to sell you an Ovi Thematic or Ovi History Magazine
please contact us immediately.

For details, contact: ovimagazine@yahoo.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced
into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means
(electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise),
without the prior permission of the writers or the above publisher of this magazine.

BOOKSHELVES

https://theoviebooks.wordpress.com/

Over **1300** eBooks
All for **FREE**!